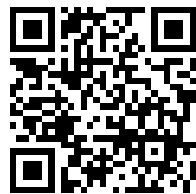


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A WINGED WORD















# A WINGED WORD;

AND OTHER

SKETCHES AND STORIES.

BY

M. A. T.,

*Author of "The House of Yorke."*

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THESE FUGITIVE LEAVES, NOW FIRST GATHERED,

ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

**To the Sisters and Pupils**

OF

**VISITATION ACADEMY, MT. DE CHANTAL, WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA.**

**BOSTON, MASS., March, 1873.**



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## A WINGED WORD.

### AN INCIDENT.

"O power of life and death  
In the tongue ! as the preacher saith."

MR. BASIL ANDREW paused in writing and held his pen suspended, his breath also slightly in suspense, as he contemplated his subject anew. He had been reviewing a theological work just published ; but his thoughts had developed as he dwelt on them, and were no longer a plan, but the torso of a plan.

He sat like one in a trance while the new idea grew ; grew slowly, almost painfully, seeming to find scant room in his brain, albeit his brows were wide. Touches from the utmost limits of his nature and his experience shaped and modified it : the swell of feeling with the ray of intellect that ruled its tide ; vague emotions and vaguer speculations, in whose mists sparks of truth were dissipated, from whose sudden meeting had sometimes sprung the electric flash of intelligence ; aspirations that had climbed their Jacob's ladder, reason fixing the rounds till the climbers took wings, and dazzled her with their transfigured faces ; fragments of knowledge hard and sharp-edged ; stray conclusions finding their premises, and stray premises their conclusions (mallet and handle for blows) all working the shape till there it stood in his brain, the perfect form of a truth.

One instant he contemplated it with rapture, while it glowed alive under his gaze ; the next, he looked outward and perceived its relations with the world. As he did so, a wave of color swept over his face ; and, heart failing, that form was no longer to him a living truth, but the statue of a truth.

"I might have known," he muttered, flinging his pen aside, "for me, at least, 'all roads lead to Rome.'"

With that flush still upon his face, he rolled up the unfinished manuscript, and deliberately laid it on the coals that burned redly in the grate, where it quivered like a sentient thing. One might fancy that the thoughts just warm from his brain still retained some clinging sensation, telling where their rest had been, as, stepping ashore, for a while we continue to feel the motion of the sea on which we have been tossing. Then the edges of the leaves blackened, slender fingers of flame stole over them, opened them out, drew rustling leaf from leaf, scorching them, till one sentence started out vivid as lightning on a cloud, that sentence on which he had paused, finding it not a conclusion, but an indication. Then a strong draught caught the yet quivering cinders and carried them up the chimney.

"There they go in a swirl, like Dante's ghosts," he thought ; and turned away to look out into the north-eastern storm that, having brushed the bloom from a crimson sunrising, was now, at afternoon, rushing in power over the city. The air was thick with snow, through which, far aloft, dark objects occasionally sailed with the wind ;—witches probably. Passers struggled in wind and drift, and the houses seemed not sure of their footing, and had a forlorn and smothered aspect. But Mr. Andrew perceived with satisfaction that the mansion in which he

dwelt maintained its dignified dowager port, and that, if ever a feathery drift presumed to alight on the door-steps, an obsequious little flirt of wind skurried round a corner of the house and whisked it off.

While the gentleman stood there, the door of the room opened for the first time in three hours, and Miss Madeleine, Mrs. Hayward's niece, came in with a book in her hand. He watched her as she crossed the room without noticing him, and, when she had seated herself at another window, he breathed out, "How sweet is solitude!" speaking in one of those cloudy, golden voices, such a voice as might have swept over the chords of David's harp when David sang.

The lady looked up, brightening for an instant as though shone upon. Then she opened her book, and Mr. Andrew returned to his table and read also. And there was silence for another hour.

Mr. Basil Andrew was in person rather superb, tall till he bent slightly with a languid grace, which also hung about his motions and his speech. But when he was excited, these mists were scorched up. Then he grew erect as a palm-tree, the not large but beautifully shaped eyes flashed out their crystalline blue, and delicate lines trembled or hardened in mouth and nostril. Then, too, it appeared that those tones of his could ring as well as melt. If it be true that

"Soul is the form, and doth the body make," the philosophical reader may be able to guess the shape of his nose and chin. Lavater would have pronounced favorably concerning his intellect from seeing only that significant inch across the brows. In color he was white and flaxen-haired, but had some undefinable glow about him, like a pale object seen in a warm light.

Mr. Andrew, at thirty-five years of

age, found himself in that pause of life, which, in natures too well poised for violent reaction, comes between the disgust of unsatisfying pursuit and the adoption of higher aims, or the disdainful and half-despairing resumption of the former life. He awaited the inspiring circumstance which should waft him hither or thither, or perhaps for his soul to gather itself and make its own will the wind's will, whichever might be more potential. Pending this afflatus, interior or exterior, he rested upon life

"As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean."

Miss Madeleine was a well enough young woman, baptized into the church, but from an early age subjected to Protestant influences, oscillating between the two, never very conspicuously Catholic except when the faith was assailed, then "*plus Arabe que l'Arabie*;" at other times following out Protestantism to its ultimate pantheism. She had a dimly remembered father and mother somewhere in church suffering or triumphant, and occasionally, when life seemed to her unstable, she sent out a little prayer for or to them, a prayer too weak to find olive-leaves. This young woman was not without power, but it escaped in reverie and dreaming; what she meant to do so vividly imagined that she rested there as on accomplished work. Too impetuous and flimsily ambitious to think with profit, her mind was encumbered with fragments of thought, often with a sparkle in them, like the broken snow-crystals she now dropped her book to watch. In fine, her outer life was a purposeless stupor, her inner life one of Carlyle's "enchanted nightmares" in miniature.

As the clock struck four, Mr. Andrew closed his book and approached his companion.

"I have been reading Thoreau's description of autumn woods," she said, "and I feel all colored. I am steeped in crimson, and purple, and amber, and rich tawny browns. My eyes are violet, and my hair is golden."

"Your hair is brown, and your eyes are gray," was the matter-of-fact reply, it being Mr. Andrew's opinion that the girl's mind needed ballast.

"What book have you there?" she asked, settling into place.

"Oh!"—just aware he still held it, "it is Father de Ravignan's *Society and Institute of the Jesuits*—very good if one desire information on the subject. Moreover, one is charmed to learn that Père de Ravignan, himself a Jesuit, has been a magistrate, and a man of his time; also that he is still a man, and, *par excellence*, a Frenchman. The good father becomes a little Hugoish and staccato when he refers to himself."

Since she still waited, watching him with eager, imperative eyes, he went on. "You know the story of the Florentine and Genoese who wished to compliment each other: 'If I were not a Genoese, I should wish to be a Florentine,' said one. 'And I,' said the other, 'if I were not a Florentine, should wish to be—' 'A Genoese!' suggested the other. 'No, a Florentine!' So I, if I were not a free-thinker, should wish to be—"

"A Catholic!" the girl broke in. "Don't deny. You already tire of your Theodore Parker, whose intellect was to him what astronomers call a crown of aberration. You have 'but to look at the church, and faith is easy! 'How beautiful are thy steps, O prince's daughter!'"

"Very pretty, but not very conclusive," was the cool comment.

"You once said to me, 'Epithets are not arguments.' Allow me to retort that apostrophes are not arguments. By the way, how impossible it is to calculate on where you may be found, except that it is sure to be 'in *issimo*.' The arc of your motion takes in both poles."

Miss Madeleine relapsed again immediately, and with a somewhat weary expression.

At the same moment the door opened wide, and Mrs. Hayward entered, producing the effect of being preceded by a band of music. This lady of fifty was ample, rustling, and complacent, and, being lymphatic, was called dignified. If, on being left a widow in straitened circumstances, and finding herself obliged to take a few boarders, Mrs. Hayward had felt any sense of diminished social lustre, no one had perceived it. "They pay my housekeeping expenses," she said serenely; and immediately that seemed the end of their being.

There is something imposing in the suave conceit of such persons. Possessing themselves so completely, they also possess those who approach them, abashing larger and more slowly ripening natures. Names respectfully pronounced by them become at once names of consequence, and trivial incidents by them related swell into significant events. If they are something, then I am nothing, is the thought with which we approach them; and the fact that they are something seems so clear, the mortifying conclusion becomes inevitable.

After this lady followed Mrs. Blake, obviously the wife of Mr. Blake, also the mother of an uproarious boy of six years who accompanied her, and who was at this moment quieted by the possession of an enormous cake he was devouring.

"Oh, the cherub!" cried Miss



Madeleine wickedly. "That child has genius. See, he eats his cake in the epical manner, beginning in the middle. Little pocket edition of his papa! Only," in an aside to her aunt, "I hope they haven't stereotyped him. And here comes his papa now."

A bang of the street-door, and enter Mr. Blake, rubbing his hands, and quoting,

'It is not that my lot is low,  
That bids the silent tear to flow;'

it is the cold. No, my son; no kiss now. Sydney Smith says that there is no affection beyond seventy or below twenty degrees Fahrenheit. Wait till I rise to the paternal temperature."

Mr. Blake was assistant editor of a second-class magazine, considered himself literary, and had a way of saying "wescrribblers" to Mr. Andrew, which made that gentleman stiffen slightly. While the one entertained the ladies with an account of the immense amount of literary labor performed by him since breakfast, the other looked from the window and absently watched the wild wind curb itself to edge off the crest of a drift, curling it over like the petal of a tuberosa, but more thinly, hanging wavering flake to flake, daintily and airily touching the frail crystals.

"Oh! there's to be a great Christmas at your cathedral to-morrow," Mr. Blake said to Madeleine, as they went out to dinner. "Bassoon's going to sing, and Kohn's orchestra to play. It will be worth seeing and hearing, especially at five o'clock. I mean to go if I can wake. And you?"

"Yes," Madeleine said, glancing at Mr. Andrews, who nodded acquiescence.

"*Similia similibus curantur*," he thought. "I'll go and get cured."

"They really do things of that sort well at the cathedral," said Mrs. Hayward patronizingly, seeming to pat a personified cathedral on the head as she softly touched the table with her plump white hand.

Madeleine groaned inwardly.

"Mr. Andrew," she said, "what should put me in mind of the frog that tried to swell to the size of an ox?"

Mr. Andrew found himself unable to guess.

"But wouldn't it have been odd," she pursued, with the air of a philosophical child, "if the frog had succeeded, and had swelled to the size of an ox?"

Mr. Andrew admitted that it would have been a phenomenon.

"But," she concluded, with an air of infantile *naïveté*, "it wouldn't have been anything but a great frog, would it?"

"My dear, what are you talking about?" said her aunt. "Pray eat your dinner."

"Christmas-eve is a fast-day of obligation," says Madeleine.

A little raising of three pairs of eyebrows fanned the flame. This young woman had a tongue of her own, and while the others dined she entertained them with a theological discourse, which, if not always logical, had some telling points, and which certainly did not assist the digestion of her hearers. They sat with very red faces, choking a little, but trying to appear indifferent.

"Do people take bitters with their dinner?" asked Mr. Andrew, at length. "I should think it would spoil the taste."

"I must say, Madeleine," Mrs. Hayward interposed, "that, considering you address Protestants, and that we are all friends of yours, you show very little regard for our feelings."

The best thing that could have

been said. Madeleine melted at once.

"O auntie!" she cried penitently, "it is not that I love Cæsar less, but Rome more." I own that it is you who have shown the Christian spirit, and reminded me that centuries ago to-night the angels sang 'Peace on earth.' I'm going to banish myself in disgrace to the parlor. Rest you merry."

Going into the parlor, she saw all out-doors suffused with a soft rose-color, a blush so tender and evanescent that it seemed everywhere but where the eye rested. "The sky side of this storm is all a sea of fire," she thought, throwing up the window, and drawing in a delicious breath of mingled sunshine, west wind, and frost. "How the clouds melt!

"And the winds and sunbeams,  
With their convex gleams,  
Build up the blue dome of the air."

Coming in later, the others found her sitting at the piano in the amethystine twilight, and singing a faint and far-away sounding Gloria.

"Hush!" said Mr. Blake, pausing on the threshold, "the evening stars have begun, that the morning stars may know. See them all of a tremor on that sky!"

Listening to those strains of threaded silver, Mr. Andrew sat looking into the twilight through which the grander constellations burned with outlines unblurred by the lesser stars. There was Orion, erect, with his girdle of worlds; Taurus, with starred horns lowered; Canis Major, witnessed to by the liquid brilliance of Sirius, matchless in shifting hues; Leo, just coming out of the East, his great paw resting on the ecliptic;—all those hieroglyphs of fire in which God has written his autograph upon the heavens.

"What a pretty myth it was," he thought, "that of the morning-stars singing together. And that other of

the star of Bethlehem!" He half-wished he could believe those things, they saved so much weary thought, so much maddening speculation. Sometimes, while straining to grasp at extraordinary knowledge, he had felt as though falling from a giddy height into outer darkness, and had drawn back shuddering, eager to catch at some homely fact for support. He smiled now mockingly to himself. "Perhaps the stars did sing. Like a child, I'm going to make believe they did, and that one 'hand-maid lamp' did attend the birth of Jesus." It was easier to believe anything while he listened to that Gloria. For, disregarded as Miss Madeleine might be at other times, when she sang she was regnant. Her voice was magnetic enough to draw the links from any man's logic.

Ceasing, she called Mr. and Mrs. Blake to the piano, and the three sang Milton's Hymn on the Nativity.

It is astonishing how magnificently some small-souled persons do contrive to sing, expressing sentiments which they must be totally incapable of experiencing. Mrs. Blake sang a superb contralto, and the three perfect voices struck fire from one listener's heart as they beat the emphatic rhythm of that majestic measure.

All but Miss Madeleine went to bed early. She kept vigil, and was to call them. They seemed scarcely to have slept when they heard her voice ring up the stairs in the muezzin-call which she Christianized for the occasion, being in no mood to call Mohammed a prophet:

"Great is the Lord! Great is the Lord!  
I bear witness that there is no God but the Lord!  
I bear witness that *Jesus* is the *Son* of God!  
Come unto prayer—come unto happiness—  
Great is the Lord! Great is the Lord!  
There is no God but the Lord!  
Prayer is better than sleep—prayer is better than sleep!"

As the last word died upon the air, every foot touched the floor, and in half an hour the party had gathered as wild as witches.

Mr. Andrew came down late and grumbling. "Cannot we hear music and see candles without getting out of bed for the purpose at such unearthly hours? I had just gone to sleep, and was in Elysium. Miss Madeleine, why should you say that prayer is better than sleep? We are not going to pray; we are going to hear demi-semi-quavers, and Mr. Bassoon's C in the deeps. I'll go to bed again."

"Possibly we may pray, Mr. Andrew," she said in a low tone. "I have been thinking to-night, and it seems to me that God had a Son, and that he will come down this morning and stand in the midst of the candles."

A Catholic, unless a convert, can scarcely understand the emotions of a stranger who enters a church for the first time on one of our great festivals. That "cool, silver shock" must be taken from another element. Our party stepped from the dim and frosty starlight into an illumination more dazzling than daylight, into a warmth that was fragrant with flowers, into a crowd where every face had a smile dissolved in it. And over all waved a sparkling tissue of violin music from the orchestra.

"By George!" was Mr. Blake's only audible comment.

"It is like the Arabian Nights!" exclaimed his wife.

"Turns up the mastodon strata in them," whispered Mr. Andrew to the lady on his arm.

They were shown to seats, and sat watching the steadily increasing crowd, and the altar that was a pyramid of fire. The worshippers were, of course, various: ragged Irish women, whose faith in-

vested them with better than cloth of gold; rich ladies, sweeping in velvets and sables, but with thoughts of better things in their faces; ambitious working-girls, finer than their mistresses. A pretty young woman came into the slip in front of our party, her face beautifully arranged to represent modesty and sweetness. She cast a glance behind at her audience, then sank upon her knees and beat her breast with one hand, while she arranged her bonnet-strings with the other. This performance at an end, she faced about and closely scanned the gallery, turning again and again till those behind her began to feel annoyed.

"I do wish he'd come!" said Madeleine impatiently.

"He has come," whispered Mr. Andrew, as the young woman suddenly returned toward the altar, and began a series of languishing attitudes and prostrations, all her *repertoire* of theatrical devotion.

A grand-looking man next attracted their attention, walking past with the unmistakable sailor roll. His head was erect, and his massive shoulders looked fit for Atlas burdens; but the clear, blue eyes were gentle, and his face was full of a beautiful solemnity and reverence. As he walked, the long, tawny beard flowing down his breast waved slightly.

Madeleine gave Mr. Andrew's arm a delighted squeeze, and whispered,

"'With many a tempest had his beard been shake.'"

Fancy him on the ship's deck, in mid-ocean, in darkness and storm, beaten by the wind, drenched with spray, lightnings blazing and thunders crashing about him, shouting to the men to cut the mast away!"

Here the organ and choir broke forth in glad acclaim, and the procession came winding in from the sa-

**cristy.** Cloth of gold and cloth of silver, lace and fine linen, and crimson and purple, all combined, gave the effect of a many-jewelled band coiled about the sanctuary.

Attending alternately to the altar and the choir, Mr. Andrew tried to believe it all a vain pageant; but thoughts will enter, though the doors be shut. What a stupendous thing, he thought, if the Real Presence were true; if, as this girl said, God had a Son, and he should come down this morning and stand in the midst of the candles!

For one instant he was dazzled and confounded by the possibility; the next, he recoiled from it.

"Gloria in excelsis" sang the choir with organ and orchestra in many an involved and thrilling strain, a pure melody springing up here and there from the midst, voice and instrument meeting and parting, catching the tone from each other, swelling till the vaulted roof of the cathedral rang, fading again, dropping away one after another, till there was left but a many-toned sigh of instruments, and one voice hanging far aloft, with a silvery flutter, upon a trill, like a humming-bird, sucking the sweetness from that flower of sound. A pause of palpitating silence, then an amen that set swinging the myrtle vines hanging over the St. Cecilia in front of the organ, and made the pennons of blue and scarlet that hung about the altar wave on their standards.

Contrary to custom, there was to be a sermon at that Mass, and, as the preacher ascended the pulpit, Mr. Andrew said to himself: "If Christ was the Son of God, he is on that altar; and if there, I wish he would speak to me by this man."

He hoped to hear an argument to prove the divinity of Christ, not aware that his reason had already been pampered with such until it

had grown insolent. The speaker, however, handled his subject quite otherwise. Assuming that divinity, he took for his theme, "what thoughts should fill the mind, what sentiments dilate the heart," on the feast of the Nativity. Calling up before them then, in a few words, a picture of that scene at once so humble and so marvellous, and pointing to the mysterious babe, he boldly announced on the threshold of his discourse the difficulties connected with the dogma for which he demanded their homage:

"This babe is a creature as you and I: this babe is the Creator of all contingent being. This babe is just born; this babe is from all eternity. This babe is contained in the manger; this babe pervades all space. It suffers: hear its cries! It enjoys bliss beyond power of augmentation. It is poor: see the swaddling-clothes! To it belong the treasures of the universe. Here present are husband and wife; yet I am required to believe that her the Holy Spirit overshadowed, a virgin conceived, a virgin bore a Son."

Not Ulysses' arrow flew through the rings with surer, swifter aim than these words through the winding doubts that had bound that listener's heart. It was too sublime not to be true! Almost the triumphant paradox—I believe, because it is impossible—broke from his lips. The human mind was incapable of inventing a falsity so glorious.

In that tumult of feeling he lost what came next; but, listening again, heard: "If I must bow down and worship, I elect him as the object of my adoration whose dwelling is in light inaccessible, who is inscrutable in his nature, and incomprehensible in his works."

"Amen!" said Basil Andrew.

"A virgin conceived, a virgin bore



a Son," repeated itself again and again in his thought. All the singing of voices and the playing of instruments were because of that ; all the splendor of the festival, the gathering of the crowd in the midst of the winter night, were for that. "O sweetest and most glorious mother in all the universe !" he thought, bowing where it is, perhaps, most difficult for a convert to render homage.

Clouds are unsubstantial things for anything but rainbows to stand on, and even they find but vanishing foothold. Had this delight warmed Basil Andrew's imagination only, it would have faded with the moment ; but thought and study had done their part, and this uprising of the heart was Pygmalion's kiss to his statue. The feeling with which he turned to leave the cathedral was one of thankful content with perfect work.

Pausing in the vestibule for the crowd to pass, he looked back with a tender fear toward the altar.

Poor Madeleine's religion was iris

and the cloud. She had known well what was going on in her companion's mind, and, as she stood waiting with him, a text went sighing through her memory like a sighing wind. "*I say unto you that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof.*" While she, a child of the church, had given it a fitful obedience more insulting than consistent disregard, this man had toiled every step of the way from a far-off heresy, and, passing by her as she loitered outside, had walked into the very penetralia.

She stood looking gloomily out into the morning that was one cloudless glow of pale gold.

"The air has crystallized since we came in," she said, "and we are shut inside a great gem, like flies in amber. We will have to stay here for ever."

He bent a smiling face toward her as they went out into the morning, and said softly : "How beautiful are thy steps, O Prince's daughter ! You were right, Madeleine !"

## HAND IN HAND.

THERE was a fire in our neighborhood the first night I passed at the Raymonds'. The alarm rang me out of sleep; and the next minute the engines rattled past. Scarcely had the ground ceased to tremble under their passage when the darkness burst, like the dusky calyx of a brilliant flower, and bloomed out rose-red.

Mrs. Raymond came into my room with a Rob Roy tartan thrown on over her night-gown. It was October, and the nights were chilly. "Yes, the fire is on Cone Street," she said. "I thought so; but we couldn't see from our chamber."

As she stood, her stately form was defined by the illumination beyond it, and a glimmering nimbus curved around the silvery hair over her forehead. I lay and looked at her. I could willingly have looked at her all night, that beautiful old woman!—whose age was as the age of wine, and meant perfection, *bouquet* of character.

She looked out a little while in

silence, then breathed a faint sigh. "It would be beautiful to see if it caused no suffering," she said.

"Yes!" I replied.

She stood a moment longer, then turned away from the window. Would she come to me? Yes, she came, laid a hand on my hair, bent down and kissed my forehead. "May the Lord bless us all, my dear!" she said. "Good-night!"

Mrs. Raymond seldom omitted that leave-taking with her friends, even when the parting was but for an hour. "An hour may mean for ever," she used to say. "I have found that out in seventy years."

As she went like a peaceful vision, I thought of Leigh Hunt's *About Ben Adhem*, to whose room the angel came at night, making the moonlight in it "rich, and like a lily in bloom." Then thought grew dreamy; and, as the rose outside changed to a passion-flower, I fell asleep under its trailing shadows.

The Raymonds lived in a charming suburban nook, among steep

banks that shut them in from sight of neighbors, but not from hearing. With nothing visible but rocks, and trees, and gardens, listening there, one could hear the pulse of human life beat to and fro without. They had a gem of a cottage, pretty gardens crowded with flowers, a grapery, a Norway spruce-tree balanced by a catalpa, and an avenue of elms reaching from the terrace-steps, close to the portico, down to the gate. There were fifty elms, twenty-five on a side, and they all sprang high and clear from the ground, then bent and twined together in the air. I dreamed about them after I went to sleep the second time that night; or, rather, my dream reproduced a real picture. I saw again that perfect pair as they walked down to welcome me when I came, the trees letting fall over them a slow, golden sprinkle of leaves, one by one. Both husband and wife were tall, nobly formed, healthy and silvery-haired, both beautiful with that beauty which comes from a cheerful piety, perfect love and sympathy with each other, and the recollection of happy years. They had grown to look alike during the fifty years they had walked hand in hand, and only the woman's soft brown eyes and the man's blue ones showed that in youth one had been a blonde, the other a brunette. Again the sunset shone in their faces, bringing out the fine stippling that time had drawn there—lines for laughing sweet and merry, lines for thought, for patience, for sadness, for sorrow, but not one for hate, or wrath, or envy had the truthful graver left. And ever as he wrought,

the softer touch of faith and love had half effaced the marks. So in my dream they came down again under the lofty arch of elms, with the light in their faces and in their shining hair. A peaceful vision! But, stretching out my hands to it, it dissolved, and I awoke.

It was sunrise, glorious with color and stillness, and a faint haze over the landscape made it look less like a morning than the picture of a morning. But, looking out, I saw that the elms, instead of their thick golden leafage, stood bare against the sky, bold sweep of sinewy limb and trembling hair-line of twig finely drawn on the azure background. In the stillness of the night, every leaf had dropped as plumb as if it had been a guinea, and under each tree its vertical shape was glowingly embossed on the greensward.

Going down stairs, I found my friends standing under a sweet-brier trellis just outside the door. They turned immediately, with a pleasant welcome. How gentle and tender their ways were! And yet they were never indolent. "Without haste, and without rest," seemed to be their motto.

"It was the Willis house, on Cone Street, that was burned," Mrs. Raymond said. "The family have not yet returned from their summer visiting, and only one servant was there, so no one was much inconvenienced but the firemen. Everything was insured. Did you see the elms? My husband was just quoting, *à propos*, from that poem on old age you read us last night:

'And leaves fall fast, and let the truthful sunlight through.'

**Look** at the morning-glory trellis! It is all purple, this morning. I like that color best when this fine chill comes into the air. Pink is a spring color."

I did not speak of the fire, since she had dropped the subject, for I knew that in the house that had been burned she had spent the first years of her married life, that there her five children had been born and had died. But after breakfast she asked me to walk round to Cone Street with her.

Mr. Raymond had an arm-chair and writing-table in an eastern bay-window of the sitting-room, and there his mornings were always spent, reading and writing. "Fortunately, one's correspondence drops off a little when one gets to be seventy-five years old," he said. "I find that I cannot easily dispose of more than one letter in a day. But our friends are kind. We have piles of little notes that require no answer."

I sat by him while Mrs. Raymond went to attend to some household duties before going out. "How impossible it is to tell just why people are charming!" I said, as she left us. "If I say that Mrs. Raymond is beautiful, is good, that her nature is harmonious, still I have not described her."

"Don't try to," he replied, with a slow smile, leaning back and folding his hands together. "Indeed, I scarcely like to describe, or hear described, one I love, any more than I would like to see analyzed a flower I cherish. I would rather know of my friends only what they generously reveal or what I involuntarily perceive. To purposely study a character, one must be intrusive and inquisitive, must penetrate into recesses and reserves which should be sacred. There is a certain coarseness of feeling in it. Mrs. Browning

says that 'being observed when observation is not sympathy, is just being tortured,' and she is right. To me, there is no companion more obnoxious than a person of that peering, unscrupulous sort, who scans my form and features as if there were no sensitive, observant soul behind them, notes every word, act, impulse, and expression, and is, I know, all the time engaged in summing up my items, and labelling me as belonging to a certain class and genus. Besides, those are not the persons who understand human nature. That knowledge is best acquired by intuition, not inquisition. Souls are to be seen, as some stars are, by looking a little away from them. So treated, their shy beams become visible to you unawares."

I did not reply; and, as if recollecting that he might, unintentionally, have seemed to include me among the "obnoxious," he turned with a gracious smile that was half for me and half for her. "Elisabeth is sincere," he said, pronouncing the last word with a fulness and emphasis that arrested my attention to it. Instinctively, I glanced up at the genealogy of a word so impressively introduced. *Sine cerâ*, without wax; therefore, pure honey. It was a crown for a wife's head, that word spoken with such tenderness and honor.

She came in then, tying on her bonnet. A wreath of purple velvet pansies lay in her hair, a full black veil fell around her shoulders, and a rich-hued cashmere shawl was wrapped about her.

She came to the window, laid her hand on her husband's shoulder, and said, "Good-by, dear!"

He echoed the word, they looked at each other with a momentary smile, then we went out.

The ruins of the fire were still

smoking when we reached them, but not one stone nor timber was left standing. After a while, we crossed the secluded street, and seated ourselves on a mossy rock a little back there among the trees. An old pine, with a crimson arabesque of vine running through it, stood guard over us and kept off the sun, the air was mellow and fragrant, and a bird sang now and then.

"Every room of that house was full of memories for me," she said dreamily; and, with her cheek resting upon her hand, fell into a reverie which I did not seek to interrupt. I could guess how the walls were built up again by her imagination, how she crossed the threshold as a bride, how doors opened and shut, how chairs and tables and pictures came back to their places, how curtains waved or windows shook in the wind. She heard again the step on the floor, the voices echoing, and saw the mirrors reflecting their faces.

Some sound or turn of thought dispelled the ghostly fabric. I could see in her eyes when it fell, and they saw only ashes. But the shock was not painful, only a solemn one. She raised her eyes heavenward, with a look of thankfulness, and her mouth softened with the reflection of a gladness too deep for smiles.

"Yes, human love is sweet and satisfying," she said slowly. "I have found it so. With God, and one true friend, there is no earthly trial which we may not face with fortitude or even with cheerfulness. It is the only real blessing on earth, that companionship."

She mused a moment, then went on: "Some women say that they could more easily part with their husband than with their children. I could not; and it seems to me that those who could must have been disappointed in their husbands. Our

children are given us to train up, then to send forth into the world to live their own lives. However great may be the mutual love and care, still they have their own separate lives; and the time comes when, as God himself ordained, they leave us, and cleave to some one else, some one nearer to them than we are. But our partners we choose when, both are mature, knowing why we choose, and it is our duty as well as our desire to be first with each other, to love and confide fully, and never to be separated. The most exacting love cannot ask for more than God permits and enjoins in the married couple. They are one, he says. Yet no one loved their children more truly than I did mine," her voice growing tremulous. "I had my hopes and dreams about them. I was a fond mother. But God's will is better than our wish; and, though I grieved, I was not made desolate when I was made childless, for my husband was left to me. If he had been taken—" She stopped, a slight motion expressive of sinking and faintness passed over her, a deathlike paleness chased the color from her face. "Thank God!" she exclaimed, drawing a quick breath. "He knows what we can bear. And now, child, forgive me for having made you weep."

She stretched her soft hand, and laid it on mine. That always seemed such a favor from her!

"But your case was a happy exception," I said. "Most people are disappointed in love."

"I am afraid it is often their own fault," she answered with a sigh. "I am sometimes astonished and terrified to see how people misuse that most sacred of gifts, the first affection of a human heart. How often is love made a subject of jest, even by those who would shrink from being thought

coarse or thoughtless! No affection, however misplaced or unreasonable, should be ridiculed. It may be wrong, or pitiable, or tragical, but never laughable. How often the knowledge that one possesses such a power over the happiness of another touches the vanity instead of the heart, or wins contempt instead of gratitude! How often what was eagerly pursued, when doubtful, becomes worthless when won; not because it is really worth less than it seemed, but because the possessor is incapable of appreciating its value! With what cruel selfishness some desire and hold an affection which they can never reciprocate, treating the heart that helps to warm their lives as they treat the stove that warms their rooms, never thinking of it except when they miss it. What wonder if such find human affection unsatisfying? Why, the world is encumbered and embittered with wasted and insulted affection!"

I quoted Longfellow:

"Talk not of wasted affection; affection never was wasted:

If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters, returning

Back to their springs, like the rain, shall fill them full of refreshment."

She shook her head gently: "For once, the poet missed his figure, and the truth. The affection that rises to God, like mist from water, does, indeed, return in refreshment. But human love flows out like a stream, and, if thrown back upon its source, carries desolation. That thought is contrary to nature and to Holy Writ. No; the mutual love of man and woman is the great harmonizer of life. It makes faith involuntary, not a struggle. It elevates, it does not lower. If we truly love one, we are tenderer ever after of all others. Is God loved better, do you think, because there is so little harmonious love on earth? No! but less. I do not mean the passing fancy of a su-

perficial admirer, nor the fitful sympathy of one who comes and goes, nor the divided friendship of one whose friendships are many, nor the flimsy romance that for an hour sees in you its visionary ideal; but the steadfast affection of one whose nature is like your own, who loves you next to God, and whose eyes are anointed to see the ideal you are capable of being, through all the faults of what you are. It has never seemed to me that the primary thought of God in creating men and women was that the earth should be peopled, but that they should be companions for each other. What did the Creator say? *'It is not good for man to be alone. Let us make him a help like unto himself.'* So human love was the crowning gift, without which even Paradise was not perfect. Since God was too immense for the heart of man to contain, and would scorch him to ashes if visibly possessed by him, as Jove did Semele, an equal being was given, that we might see, 'as in a rose-bush, love's divine!'"

When she stopped, with her head raised, and a color as rich as that of a June rose trembling in her cheeks, I bent and kissed her hand.

She smiled upon me: "If I were but sixteen years old, my dear, some might call what I have been saying romantic folly. But I am seventy, and I know. Trust me! Do not lose faith in your girlish dreams. They are true somewhere, if not here. Believe in every lovely and noble vision you ever had. If you must renounce them for a time, do it bravely, but trust the hereafter."

After a while, I ventured a question: "Will you tell me something of your marriage?"

"'Tis the old story," she said smilingly; "only simpler and happier than most. Of course, I expected some one—girls always do—but I

expected him seriously. I used to pray for him, whoever he might be, and I studied, and acted, and kept myself with reference to him. I shrank from all jesting about love, and from girlish flirtations. I must go to him with a fresh heart. It never occurred to me to deceive him. If I had done wrong, I would have told him first. Well, I made one or two mistakes, thinking that the right one had come; but I soon found them out, and there was nothing to regret. At length, when I had begun to ask myself if there really was any such person, he came. When I first saw James, I knew at once that he was what I wanted. There was a season of terrible doubt as to whether I was what he wanted. Then, thanks be to God! I knew that I did suit him. And so we were married. How little it is, and how much!"

"How much!" she repeated presently, and looked up the road, as if some one there had spoken to her.

I had not heard a sound, but, following her glance, I saw Mr. Raymond coming to us.

She smiled, her face turned immovably his way. But, as her gaze dwelt, it lost its outward expression, and when he reached us she seemed to be more aware of his spiritual than his bodily presence. He was about to speak, but, glancing in her face, remained silent. He seated himself beside her as I rose, and held the hand she placed in his. The light October breeze became a living touch and a whisper, the sunshine a benediction, the overhanging pine-tree, with its rubric of vine, was a scroll written with a glad promise. The two sat there, gazing at the ashes of their early home, and mentally trod that path again, from the coming of the bride, down through joyful and sorrowful times, till they reached their present selves. She felt instinc-

tively when he came down and found her with white hair, and faded cheeks, and she sang softly, in a voice which had yet a tremulous sweetness:

"Now we maun totter doun, John;  
But hand in hand we'll go;  
And we'll sleep thegither at the foot,  
John Anderson, my jo!"

Her voice died to a silvery thread, her head drooped a little, till her withered cheek rested on his shoulder. The eyes of both were overflowing, but the skies on which they gazed touched their tears with light.

The next day I left them.

A month passed; and it was drawing toward the last of November when I received a call to the Raymonds. I must come quickly, the dear lady wrote. Her husband was ill, and at the point of death.

By some accident, the letter was delayed, and two days had passed before I stepped out at the familiar gate, and, with a trembling heart, hurried up the avenue. A friend met me at the door, and I did not need to be told that I was too late.

"Mrs. Raymond is very quiet," he said, "but seems rather bewildered, and a great deal older. She does not weep, but says continually, 'The Lord knows! The Lord knows best!'" as if something had surprised her, and happened differently from what she had expected. She is with him now. She sits there nearly all the time. I wish she would not, it is so cold!"

I waited restlessly for her to come out. It was too cold for her to stay long, and now a light snow, the first of the season, was falling; not from thickening skies, but in sunlighted flings, out of detached clouds sailing over.

When I could wait no longer, I opened the door of the great chilly room where the dead lay. There were flowers all about, and the cur-

tains were up, letting in a light so bright that the candle-flames were almost invisible, and a large white crucifix standing there glowed as if wrought in gold. The upper half of one window was open, and before that lay stretched the husband, his peaceful face uncovered and touched with light. The wife knelt beside him, her face hid in the pillow on which his head rested, her hand put up over his breast and clasping his hand.

I had opened the door gently, and she did not stir. I crossed the room

with noiseless step, and stood beside her, not daring to speak, not having the heart to speak, but looking tearfully into that silent face. The light snow-flakes had drifted in and settled in his hair, scarcely seen in its whiteness. I glanced at those two hands, his and hers, clasped together on his breast. The floating snowflakes had settled there, too, over the fingers of both, *and they had not melted on either.*

So peacefully, so joyfully, they had both gone out, hand in hand,

"Into the land of the great departed!  
Into the Silent Land."



## DOUGHERTY.

THE warden's wife followed her husband down the steps leading to the prison. "*O caro Duca mio*," is there an inscription over the door?" she asked; "for I have brought hope with me, and will not let it go."

Not having anything to say, the warden remained silent. He was used to his wife's fanciful ways of speaking, and liked to hear her pleasant voice, though her meaning might escape him. For education had emphasized the difference which nature had pronounced between these two—a difference which William Blake has defined in a word: the man looked *with* his eyes, the woman looked *through* hers.

Besides, the warden's attention was at the moment fully occupied. The prison-bell had rung the second time, and the convicts had finished their day's work. Mr. and Mrs. Raynor stood just within the great entrance of the prison, and watched the sluggish streams of crime that oozed from the doors of the different shops, joined in the yard, and crept toward them—an Acheron, in which human faces presently became visible; but faces bleached, unwholesome, and expressionless. Perhaps their souls had been scorched up in the baleful flames that had wafted these men hither, or mesmerized in the leaden to-and-fro of their lives. Or, more likely, retired to some secret recess of the brain, their restless wits might be working out new designs of evil.

An occasional spark in some side-long eye favored the latter guess.

"Now for explanation," the warden said, keeping a strict eye on the advancing line, yet aware of a hand stealing toward his arm. "Be careful, dear! my revolver is on that side. Your man will go into the furthest cell in the first ward. His name is Dougherty; his nationality, of course, a mystery. He was sentenced ten years for assault and highway robbery, and has now but two months to stay. Excepting this one affair, he has always borne a good name, and there couldn't be a better prisoner. He might have been pardoned out long ago if he had tried, but he never asks favors. When he came here, his only brother, a decent fellow, went to California. He couldn't stand the disgrace. But he writes once a month, a very good letter, too; and when the ten years shall be up, will come or send for his brother. They say that Dougherty behaved very well by him when he went away, and gave him all his, Dougherty's, money. I shouldn't wonder. The fellow has the strongest sense of duty I ever knew in a man. That's what is the matter with him now. He told the deputy yesterday that he should never go to chapel again. He had before been in doubt about it, he said; but when the chaplain praised Martin Luther, and called the church some ugly name or other, then he knew that it was a sin for him to lis-

ten. I don't want to punish him, but, of course, he must go to chapel. I can't make exceptions; and half a dozen of the worst rascals here have some way got wind of the affair, and have all at once experienced theology. That tall, heavy fellow, who murdered his mother and his brother, and then set fire to the house and burnt their bodies up, had his feelings badly hurt when the chaplain said something sarcastic of the pope's great toe. But Dougherty is honest, and if he will submit, I can easily bring the others down. If he should hold out, there will be trouble; for they will do for deviltry what he will do for conscience' sake. If you can talk him over, I shall be glad; but I haven't much hope of it. He is not a man likely to be influenced by a woman's soft words. He is granite."

The wife smiled saucily. "I have seen a silly little pink cloud make a granite boulder blush as though it had blood in it," she said.

At this moment the file of convicts reached the portal, and came winding through in the slow lock-step, separated noiselessly into detachments, a part moving toward the lower cells, the rest climbing the narrow flight of stairs leading to the upper tiers. The faces of the men caught an additional pallor from the cold, whitewashed stone of the prison, and a darker shade as, one by one, they disappeared into the cells, the doors clapping to in rapid succession behind them, like the leaves of a book run over in the fingers. In a few minutes the whole line had crumbled away, and there were visible but the three tiers of iron doors, each door with a hand thrust through the bars, and a dim face behind them.

Mrs. Raynor glanced up the block to the last cell. The hand she saw there had a character of its own. The fingers were not half-closed, listlessly

waiting to be seen, but firm and straight, and the thumb was clasped tightly around the bar against which it rested—a dogged hand. "You think that the dungeon would have no effect?" she asked.

The warden repeated the word "dungeon" with a circumflex calculated to give the impression that the apartment in question was vaulted. "I doubt if even the strings will break him," he said. "You take a Catholic Irishman born in Ireland, and you can't hammer nor melt him into anything but a Catholic. He may lie as fast as a dog can trot, and steal your eye-teeth from under your eyes; but if you cut him into inch pieces, as long as he has a thumb and finger left, he will make the sign of the cross with them. You are losing courage, little woman."

"No!"

"Well, good luck to you! I'm going off."

The lady walked up the ward, nodding to the convicts who pressed eagerly for recognition, stopping to speak to those who had requests to make, and, pausing at a little distance from the upper cell, looked attentively at its occupant, herself unseen by him.

The warden had well compared this man to granite. He was tall, thick-set, as straight as a post, had the broad, combative Irish head, crowned with a luxuriance of dark-brown hair, and square jaws that promised a tenacious grip on whatever he might set his mental teeth in. But the face was honest, though hard, and the straight mouth did not look as though giving to lying or blasphemy, but had something solemn in its closing. The well-shaped nose was as notable for spirit as the mouth for firmness, and the blue-grey eyes were steady, not bright, and rather small. Altogether, a man of whom one might

say that, if he were not so good, he would not have been so bad.

This convict sat on a bench in the middle of his little whitewashed cell, and appeared to be lost in thought. But in his attitude there was none of that easy drooping which usually accompanies such abstraction. He sat perfectly upright and rigid, the only perceptible motion a quick one of the eyelids, the eyes fixed—locked, rather than lost in thought.

He rose immediately on seeing who his visitor was, bowed with a soldierly stiffness that was not without state, and waited for her to speak.

After a few pleasant inquiries, civilly answered, she told her errand. It was not so easy as she had expected; but she spoke kindly and earnestly, urging the necessity for discipline in such a place, and the unwillingness of the warden to inflict any punishment on him. "I have no doubt of your sincerity," she concluded, "though the others mean only mischief. But the decision must be the same in both cases."

He listened attentively to every word she said, then replied with quiet firmness, "I am sorry, ma'am, that there is going to be any trouble about it. But it would be a sin for me to go and hear Protestantism called the church of God; when it is no more a church than a barnacle is a ship."

"That is not the question," she persisted. "Admitting that what the chaplain says may be false, I still say that you ought to go. You are herein in a state of servitude; you have no will of your own; your duty is obedience to the rules of the place; and the more difficult that duty, the more your merit. If you should listen with pleasure, or even with toleration, while your faith is attacked, that might be sin; but the listening unwillingly and with pain you can offer

to God as a penance in expiation of the crime which obliges you to perform it. I am speaking now as a Catholic would. I believe that your priest would say the same."

She paused to note the effect of her words; but his face was unmoved.

"I have a dear friend who is a Catholic," she added. "For her sake I should be sorry to have you punished for such a cause."

This plea made no impression whatever. Plainly, the man was not soft-hearted, nor susceptible to flattery. He merely listened, and appeared to be gravely considering the subject.

"To yield would be humility; to refuse would be pride," she said. "You need not listen while in the chapel; you can think your own thoughts and say your own prayers."

As he still pondered, she again went over her argument, enlarging and dwelling on it till it reached his comprehension. He listened as before, but made no sign of approval nor dissent. Either from nature or habit, it seemed hard for the man to get his mouth open. But at length he spoke.

"You were right, ma'am, in telling me that my duty here is obedience," he said; "but you left out one condition—obedience in all that is not sin. If the warden should tell me to kill a man, it would not be my duty to obey. I do obey in all that is not sin. It would be a sin for me to go to chapel."

He spoke respectfully, but with decision; and the lady perceived that their argument had reached a knot which only the hand of authority could cut. She sighed, and abandoned her attempt.

Could she abandon it? Remembering the dungeon and the strings, her heart strengthened itself for one

more effort. She had begun by marching straight up to the subject, challenging opposition ; it might be better to approach circuitously. "Let me undermine him," she thought ; and, turning away, as though leaving the captive to silence and loneliness again, let the sense of returning desolation catch him an instant, then hesitated, and glanced backward. It was a good beginning ; he was looking after her. The sight of a friendly face, the sound of a friendly voice, and liberty to speak, were unfrequent boons in that place, and too precious to be willingly relinquished.

"The days must seem long to you," she said.

He came nearer, and leaned against the door. "Yes, they are long ; but I thank God for every one of them. My coming here was the best thing that ever happened to me. I was getting to be drunkard, and this put a stop to it."

As he spoke, he lifted his face and looked out at the strip of sky visible through the window across the corridor, and his eyes began to kindle.

"Have you a family?" the lady asked.

He waited a moment before answering, seemed to break some link of thought that had a bright fracture, and his expression underwent a slight but decided change. A light in it that had been **lofty** softened to a light that was tender, as at her question he looked down again. "There's Larry," he said.

"And who is Larry?"

The convict stared with astonishment at her ignorance. And, indeed, Mrs. Raynor was the only person about the prison who had not heard the name of this Larry. "He is my step-brother, ma'am," he replied. "We had but the one father ; but he had his own mother. When she died,

there were two of us left, and I took the lad and brought him to this country. He was five years old then, and I was twenty. I was a stone-cutter, and thought to do better here ; and, faith, one way I have, and another way I haven't. Shame never touched one of us at home."

"Who took care of the child?" Mrs. Raynor asked.

"Myself, ma'am. He ate and slept with me, and I took him on my arm as often as I put my hat on. He had his little chair on the table in my shop, or he played about at the end of a long string. For the lad was venturesome, and I never trusted him but with a tether."

"He must have been a great care," she said.

"Have you any children, ma'am?" the convict asked.

"No."

"I thought that," he said dryly ; then smiled. "Larry was like a picture. He had red cheeks and black eyes, and his hair was like gold with a shadow on it. It used to take me half an hour every morning to make his curls, and they reached to his waist. Everybody noticed the child, and they'd turn to look after him in the street. One of the richest ladies in the city wanted to take him for her own, and me to promise never to see him again ; and when she told what she would do for him, I thought that perhaps I ought to let him go. The lady coaxed him, and gave him picture-books and candy, and then asked him if he'd go and live with her ; and faith, ma'am, my heart didn't get such a scalding when Mary asked her promise back, and said she liked Larry best, as it did when that child went to the lady's knee and said he would go and live with her. God forgive me, but I hated her that minute. Well, I told her that I would think about it, and let her know the next

day. That night I dreamed that she had him, and that I saw him far off at play, dressed in jewels, and his little frock like a fall of snow. I dreamed that I couldn't speak to him, and that set me crying; and I cried so that I waked myself up. I put my hand out for the child, but I couldn't find him. He was a restless little fellow, and had crawled down to the foot of the bed. For a minute I thought that the dream was true; and then I knew that I couldn't let him go. I waked him up, and asked him if he'd stay and live for ever with his brother John; and I was a happy man when he put his little arms round my neck and said yes, he would. And I made a promise to the child that night, while he was asleep in my arms, that, since I kept him back from being a rich man, whatever he might ask of me in all his life, if it was my heart's blood, he should have it! And, ma'am, I've kept my promise."

The tenderness with which he spoke of his brother invested the convict's manner with the softening grace it so much needed, and showed upon his rough nature like a gentian upon its rock."

"This brother is in California?" Mrs. Raynor asked.

The convict dropped his eyes. "He and Mary went there when I came here," he said.

"Who is Mary?"

"Mary is Larry's wife," was the brief reply.

"You hear from them?"

"Oh! yes," he said eagerly. "They write to me every month. In his last letter Larry said that he was coming after me at the end of my term; but I sent him word not to. I can go alone, and he will send me the money."

The man seemed to have a jealous suspicion of her thought that he had

been cruelly deserted. "I told them to go," he said with a touch of pride; "and I shall go and live with them when I get out of this. They wouldn't hear to my going anywhere else."

He broke off, glanced through the window, and said, as if involuntarily, "There's the west wind!" then drew back, rather ashamed when the lady looked to find what he meant. "You see, ma'am, we don't have much to think of here, and there's only the sight of stone and iron, and that bit of sky. Three years ago there wasn't a glimpse of green; but two years ago I began to catch a flit of leaves when the west wind blew. Last summer I could see a green tip of a bough all the time, and now in the high March wind I can see a bit of a twig."

"It is an elm-tree," the warden's wife said; "and the branches are longest on this side. I think they stretch out for you to see. You miss many a pleasant sight here, Dougherty."

"What I miss is nothing to what I have seen," he said quickly, his eyes beginning again to kindle.

"What do you mean?"

He gazed at her searchingly for a moment, as if to read whether she were worthy to hear; then he looked up at the sky.

Mrs. Raynor tried not to be impressed. "He is a thief, serving out his sentence in the State prison," she repeated mentally. "He is a poor, ignorant Irishman, who can scarcely spell his own name, and who reverences a polysyllable next to the priest."

"I will tell you," he said after a moment, his voice trembling slightly, not with weakness, but with fervor. "When I first came here, I had to pray all the time to keep myself from going crazy; but by and by I got reconciled. You know we never

have a priest here, and must find things out as well as we can for ourselves. All I wanted to know was whether God was angry with me. Sometimes I thought he was; but that might be a temptation of the devil. What I am going to tell you happened about six months ago, at nine o'clock in the evening. The night-watch was in, and had just gone round. He spoke to me, and I answered him. I was in bed, and I shut my eyes as soon as he went back to his place. Something made me open them again, and I saw on the wall of my cell here a little spot like moonlight. It grew larger while I looked, and the whole cell was full of the light of it; and it trembled like the flame of a candle in the wind. There didn't seem to be any wall here; it was all opened out. I pulled the blanket about me and went down to my knees on the stone floor. I don't know how long it was before two faces began to show in the midst of the light; and when they came, it was still. At first they were faint; but they grew brighter till they were as bright as I could bear. I couldn't tell whether it was the brightness in their faces or the thought in my heart, that brought the tears into my eyes. There was the Blessed Virgin with the Infant Jesus in her arms, and they both looking at me and smiling. And while they smiled, they faded away!"

"How probable that would sound if it were related as having happened in the year of our Lord 62, instead of 1862!" the lady thought, restraining a smile, awed by the perfect conviction of the speaker.

"Dougherty," she said, "a man like you ought not to be caught at highway robbery. How did it happen?"

Some swift emotion passed over his face; but whether of fear or an-

ger she could not tell. The next moment he smiled grimly. "I know just how it happened, ma'am," he said; "for didn't the lawyers tell me? Oh! but they told the whole story so plain you'd have thought they did the deed themselves; and faith, they made me almost believe I did it. It is a very convincing way that the lawyers have about them. They made out that Mike Murray was at our house one night, and we all played cards and got drunk together; and when we were pretty high, that Larry and I went out with Mike to see him home; and that I sent Larry back, he being too drunk to go on; and that I waited upon Mike out to a piece of woods, and there I knocked him down and robbed him; and that he was picked up half-dead the next morning, and I was caught throwing the money away. They proved that I only did it because I was drunk, and that I never did a dishonest deed before; and so they sent me here for ten years. And the pity it was of poor Mike Murray! It would have brought tears to your eyes to hear that lawyer go on about him, as if Mike was his own father's son, and a saint to the bargain, instead of a dirty, drunken blackguard that Mary was mad to see in the house, and that beat his own wife with a stool, and kicked her down-stairs every morning; and that's the way she used to get down. She told our Mary that she was never without a sore spot on her head, and that when she got to the top of a flight of stairs, if it was in the church itself, she'd look behind for the kick that Mike always had for her. Indeed, ma'am, while the lawyer was talking, I didn't believe he meant the Mike Murray I knew at all, but a sweet, gentle creature with the same name, and that never took a sup of anything but milk. And that's the story of my coming here,

ma'am," the convict concluded, giving a short laugh.

"You have had troubles enough," Mrs. Raynor said gently; "but now they are nearly over. Only two months longer, and you will be free. It won't hurt you to go to chapel for that short time."

"I shall not go," he replied.

She turned away at that, went into the deserted prison-yard, and stood there a moment recollecting a sermon she had heard not long before. "Why should we not now have a saint after the grand old way?" the speaker had asked.

"There is every reason why we should not!" she exclaimed impatiently. "Those *bizarre*, uncompromising virtues of the antique time would now scandalize the very elect. We must not offend against *les biens-étances*, though all the saints should clap their hands. This poor Irishman is unquestionably a little wrong in his head, and will have to go to the dungeon. For you, Madge Raynor, you had best return to your hem-stitching, and cease pulling at the skirts of the millennium. What a quixotic little body you are, to be sure!"

To the dungeon, accordingly, Dougherty was sent the next Sunday; and after a few hours, the warden's wife went to see him.

A door of solid iron opened in the basement wall of the prison, and let the light into a stone vestibule that was otherwise perfectly dark. Opposite this entrance was what looked like an oven or furnace-door, about two feet square, and also of solid iron. Removing a padlock from the inner door, the guard opened it, and called Dougherty.

Mrs. Raynor started back as the foul air from the dungeon struck her face; for, though there was an aperture artfully contrived so as to admit a little air and exclude all light, it

was not large enough to do more than keep the prisoner from actual suffocation.

"You are acting like a simpleton!" the lady exclaimed when the convict's pale face appeared at the opening. "Go to chapel next Sunday, and say your prayers under the parson's nose. I will give you beads that shall rattle like hail-stones."

"I thank you, ma'am!" the man replied in his provokingly quiet way; "but I can't go to chapel."

"You expect to enjoy staying here three days, with bread and water once a day, sitting and sleeping on bare stones, and breathing air that would sicken a dog?" she demanded angrily.

"That is nothing to what my Lord suffered for me," was the reply.

"You fancy yourself a martyr, and that the officers of the prison are children of the devil!" she said.

"I don't blame them," he answered. "They do what they think is right."

"Shut him up!" she exclaimed, turning away. "It's a pity we have n't a rack for the blockhead. He is pining for it."

Dougherty did not complain nor yield; but he was put to work again after three days, that being the longest time the rules allowed a man to be kept in the dungeon.

Mrs. Raynor was annoyed with herself for taking such an interest in this contumacious thief. Every day she protested that she would not worry about him, and every day she worried more and more. When Sunday came again, "I will not go near him," she said. "I will leave him to his fate. 'What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?'" and even while speaking, counted anxiously the last strokes of the prison-bell ringing for service. At that moment the convicts were entering the chapel, all

but the sick, and that troublesome *protégé* of hers. "I won't go near him," she said in a very determined manner, and, five minutes after, was on her way up the prison-stairs.

Letting herself into the guard-room with a pass-key, she found but one man on guard; but the voices of others came through the open door of the hospital, and with them a long, agonized moan. Hurrying into the cell where the punishment called "the strings" was inflicted, Mrs. Raynor saw Dougherty hanging by his wrists to a chain run through a ring in the ceiling. His toes touched the floor and slightly relieved the otherwise intolerable strain on his shoulders and breast. One of the guards kept the chain up, while the deputy-warden stood by the convict and watched for the first sign of submission or of fainting.

The man groaned with pain, and drops of perspiration rolled down his face.

"Will you give up and go to chapel next Sunday?" asked the deputy.

"O God! strengthen me," cried the convict. "No, I will not go!"

Mrs. Raynor's pale face flushed as she heard this reply.

The moans became fainter.

"Now, give up like a man," the deputy said. "You've shown your grit, and that is enough."

"Lord, help me!" came in a broken cry.

"He's going; let him down," the deputy said.

"Dead?" cried the warden's wife, starting forward.

"No, madam; he has fainted."

They applied restoratives, and when his senses had returned, led him, reeling, out into the guard-room, and placed him in a chair by the open window.

"Did you ever read a history of

the Spanish Inquisition, Mr. Deputy?" asked the warden's wife.

"Yes'm!" was the immediate reply. "This is just like it, isn't it?"

"Well, Dougherty, you will be content now, and go to chapel next Sunday, will you not?" asked the lady, touching the convict's sleeve.

He lifted his heavy eyes. He was still catching his breath like one who sobs. "I will die before I will go to hear the name of God and of his truth blasphemed!" he answered, speaking with difficulty.

"But if you should be again put up in the strings?"

He shivered, but replied without hesitation, "He that died upon the cross will strengthen me."

"The fellow is a fool!" muttered one of the guard.

"May God multiply such fools!" cried Mrs. Raynor, turning upon the speaker. Then to the convict, "I will urge you no more. I am not capable of judging for you, and you do not need help nor advice from me. Go your own way."

Dougherty's own way was to persist in his refusal to attend chapel; and since the officers had no choice but to punish him for his disobedience, it chanced that for the next four weeks he was put up in the strings every Sunday morning.

"It shall not be done again," the warden said then. "He has but a fortnight longer to stay; and, rule or no rule, he shall do as he likes."

"Only a fortnight," he said to the convict, "then you will be a free man."

Dougherty's face brightened. "Yes, sir! And I long to set my feet on the turf again. A man doesn't know what green grass is, till he gets shut up in a place like this."

"Don't come here again," the officer said kindly. "Let what you



have suffered teach you to resist temptation."

The convict looked at Mr. Raynor with a singular expression of surprise, not unmingled with a momentary indignation, and seemed about to speak, but checked himself.

"It is only to keep from drink," the warden went on. "I don't believe you would be dishonest when sober."

The convict dropped his eyes. "God knows all hearts," he said.

The next day Dougherty had a cold and a headache; the second day he was unable to go to work; the third day he had a settled fever. He was removed to the hospital, where the cells were larger, and, being next the outside wall, had light and air; a convict whose term had nearly expired was set to take care of him, and Mrs. Raynor visited him twice a day.

But the fever had got well fixed before the man gave up, and it found him good fuel. He burned like a solid beech log, with a slow, intense, unquenchable heat. His pale and sallow face became a dull crimson; his strong, full pulses beat fiercely in neck, wrists, and temples; and his restless eyes glowed with a brilliant lustre. Mrs. Raynor was sometimes startled, as she sat fanning and bathing his face, fancying that she had soothed him to sleep, to see those eyes open suddenly, and fix themselves on her with a searching gaze, or wander wildly about the cell. But he lay almost as motionless as the burning log would, locked in that fierce and silent struggle with disease. Nearly a fortnight passed, and there were but two days left of Dougherty's term of imprisonment; but there was no longer a hope that any freedom of man's giving would profit him. There was scarcely more

than the embers of a man left of him; not enough, indeed, for a fever to prey upon. The flushes had become intermittent, like the last flickerings of a fire, and the parched and blackened mouth showed how he had been consumed inwardly.

It was May, and the sweet air and sunshine came in through two narrow windows and lightened and freshened the cell where the convict lay. Everything was clean and in order. The stone walls and floor were whitewashed; a prayer-book, crucifix, medicine, and glasses were carefully arranged on a little table between the windows; and there was a spotless cover on the narrow pallet that stood opposite. The door was wide open for a draught, and now and then one of the guard, approaching laboriously on tiptoe, would put his head into the cell, raise his eyebrows inquiringly at the convict-nurse who sat at the head of the bed, receive a nod in return, and retire with the same painful feint of making no noise. Neither of the two men was quite clear in his mind as to what he meant by this pantomime; but the result with both was a conviction that all was right. Presently, as the afternoon waned, there was the soft rustle of a woman's garments in the corridor, and a woman's unmistakable velvet footfall. At that sound the convict-nurse went lightly out; and Mrs. Raynor came in, and seated herself on the stool where he had sat, and slipped a bit of ice between the lips of the patient. He had been lying motionless and apparently asleep during the last hour; but as she touched him, he opened his eyes and fixed them upon her. "What does the doctor say, ma'am?" he asked in a tone so firm that one forgot it was but a whisper.

"I think that you will want to see the priest," she said gently. "I have

sent for one, and he will come to-morrow."

A slight spasm passed over the sick man's face, his eyelids quivered, and his mouth contracted for an instant.

"It must come to us all sooner or later," she continued; "and it is well for us that He who knows best and does best is the one to choose."

He said not a word, but closed his eyes again; and she kept silence while he went through with his struggle, her own tears starting as she saw how the tears swelled under his eyelids, and the stern mouth quivered, and knew that he was tearing up the few simple hopes that had taken root in his heart: the setting his feet on the green grass again, the meeting his brother, the dream of a cheerful fireside where he should be welcome, the honest gains and generous gifts, the happy laughter, kind looks, and sorrows from which love and faith should draw the sting. Simple hopes; but they had struck deep, and every fibre of the man's heart quivered and bled at their uprooting.

Presently the watcher spoke softly: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord hath mercy on them that fear him!"

"May his will be done!" said the convict. "But, poor Larry!"

"You want me to write to him?"

"Yes ma'am!" he answered eagerly. "Tell him that I was comfortable here, and that I was willing to die; and be sure to tell him that coming here was the best thing that ever happened to me. Don't let him know anything about the punishment. Larry'd feel bad about that. Don't forget!" he urged, looking anxiously in the lady's face.

"I won't forget," she said.

He stopped a moment for breath; then resumed, "Tell him that my last words were, that he should re-

member his promises to me, and never taste liquor again. And tell him to be kind to Mary for my sake. You see, ma'am, I was fond of Mary; but of course she liked Larry best."

The lady blushed faintly, and laid her cool white hand on his fevered one. "Dougherty," she said, "nobody but God thanks us for true love. In this world a light love meets with most gratitude."

"Sometimes I've thought the same," the man said gravely. "Some are made to give, and some are made to take; but the Lord gives to all."

The next day a priest came and spent some time with the sick man. Mrs. Raynor went up for her afternoon visit, and found him still lingering there, looking gravely and intently at his penitent, who lay with an expression of perfect peace on his countenance.

"Poor man!" she sighed, glancing toward the bed.

The father looked up with a light flashing into his thoughtful eyes. "Poor man, madam?" he repeated. "Not so: that man is rich! It is for him to pity us."

She followed the priest out, and spoke to him in the corridor. "Dougherty's brother has come from California," she said. "He reached here this morning. It seems hard to keep him out, but I hate to disturb a man who is dying."

The priest frowned. "Keep the fellow out for to-day. I have just given this man the viaticum, and want him to be undisturbed. His confession has exhausted him, and he mustn't be made to talk much more. How does his brother appear?"

"Oh! he is frantic. He fainted when I first told him, and I could hear him crying out in the yard when I got up into the guard-room.

I told him that ne couldn't come in till he became quiet."

"What sort of fellow is he?" asked the priest coldly.

The lady hesitated. In spite of her pity, she did not fancy Larry; neither did she like the coldness the priest showed toward him. "He is a very handsome young man," she said presently, "and very well dressed."

The father shrugged his shoulders. "Oh! then he should be admitted without delay."

She must, of course, free herself from such an imputation. "He looks weak and faithless," she said; "but his grief is genuine; and his having come so far shows that he loves his brother."

"You might tell Dougherty tonight, and let Larry in to-morrow morning if he behaves himself."

Mrs. Raynor sat by her patient without speaking, till presently he looked at her and smiled faintly. "May the Lord reward you, ma'am!" he said fervently. "You've been a good friend to me."

"Here is a note from your brother," she said. "Shall I read it to you?"

He glanced eagerly at the folded paper in her hand—a note which, in the midst of his lamentations, Larry had written and entreated her to take up to his brother.

"Read it!" the sick man said, making an effort to turn toward her.

"Would you like very much to see your brother?" she asked.

Dougherty's face began to work. "O ma'am! has Larry come?" he asked tremulously.

"Yes; and presently he is to come in to see you. Of course, he feels very much grieved, you know. That must be. But when he shall see how resigned and happy you are, he will take comfort."

Seeing that he eagerly watched the

paper in her hand, the lady unfolded and glanced over it. As she did so, her face underwent a change. "It cannot be!" she cried out; and, crushing the note, looked at the man who lay there dying before her.

He did not understand, was too weak and dull to think of anything but the letter. "Read it!" he said faintly.

She began breathlessly to read the blotted page: "My dear brother John, for God's sake don't die! I have come to take you back to California with me, and Mary and I will spend our lives in taking care of you. We will make up to you what you have suffered for me, going to prison for my crime."

The sick man started up with sudden energy and snatched the paper from the reader's hand. "The lad is wild!" he gasped. "He didn't know what he was writing!"

She tried to soothe him, to coax him to lie down; but he sat rigid with that terrible suspense, his haggard eyes fixed on hers, a deathly pallor in his face.

"You won't tell anybody what the foolish boy wrote!" he pleaded.

"It was your brother, then, who robbed the man?" she said.

He sank back, moaning, upon his pillow. "All for nothing!" he said despairingly. "I've given my heart's blood for nothing! O ma'am! have you the heart to spoil all I've been trying to do, and have just about finished?"

It was a hard promise to give, but she gave it. Without his permission, what she had learned should never be revealed.

"The poor lad wasn't to blame," the sick man said. "It was drink did it. Drink always made Larry crazy. When he got home that night, he didn't know what he'd been doing; but in the morning Mary found the

money on him, and the stain of blood on his hand. I tried to throw the money away, and they saw me."

He paused, gasping for breath. He was making an effort beyond his strength.

"Tell me the rest to-morrow," Mrs. Raynor said, giving him a spoonful of cordial.

But he went on excitedly, clutching at the bed-clothes as he spoke. "It would have been the ruin of Larry if he had come here. He would never again have looked anybody in the face. Besides, Marv's heart was broke entirely. So when I was caught, I just bid Larry hold his peace. But I didn't tell any lie, ma'am. When they asked me in court if I was guilty or not guilty, I said 'not guilty;' and it was true."

She gave him the cordial again, wiped his forehead, and, noticing that his hands were cold, first lifted the blanket to cover them, then hesitated, looked at him more closely, finally laid it back.

He lay for a while silent and exhausted, then spoke again. "You promise?"

"I promise, Dougherty. Set your heart at rest. You are dying; did you know it?"

"Yes, ma'am!"

After a while he said faintly, "My time will be up to-morrow morning."

"Yes!"

Twilight faded into night. Mrs. Raynor went into the house for a while, then returned to sit by her patient, sending the nurse out. One and another came to the cell-door, looked in, spoke a word, then went away. The heavy doors clanged, there was a sound of rattling bars as the prison was closed for the night, then silence scudded over all. The dying man lay perfectly quiet, breathing slowly, and responding now and then to the prayers read by his at-

tendant. He felt no pain, and his mind was clear and calm. He had no complicated intellectual mechanism to confuse his ideas of right and wrong; there was no labyrinth of sophistry to entangle his faith, no flutter of imagination to start a latent fear. He had done what he could; and he held on to the promises with an iron grasp.

That lonely watcher almost feared for him. Might he not be presuming on an act of devotion which, after all, rose from a love that was entirely human?

"My friend," she said, "even the angels are not pure before God. Perhaps you loved your brother too well."

"If I had loved him less, he would have been lost," was the calm reply. "I haven't loved him well enough to sin for him."

"Do not be too sure," she said.

"I'm a poor, ignorant man; but I've done as well as I knew how; and He has promised. I never broke a promise to man nor woman, and do you think that the Almighty would do the thing that I would scorn to do?"

"Are you not afraid of presumption?"

"It would be presumption to doubt the word of God."

"Do not rely on your own strength," she urged.

"I have no strength but what he gives me," said the dying man.

While they talked, or prayed, or were silent, the stars wore slowly and brightly past the open windows of the cell, dropping down the west like golden sands in an hour-glass, and counting out the minutes of that ebbing life. Then the dim and humid crescent of the waning moon stole by in the early morning twilight; then the air grew alive with the golden glances of the dawn. As the sun rose, the

man called Dougherty, a convict no longer, lay dead on his prison pallet, his face white and calm, the dull eyes half open, as though the deserted body followed with a solemn gaze the flight of its emancipated tenant.

"Would you rather have been the angel loosing Peter, or Peter in chains? I would rather have been Peter!"

## IN THE GREENWOOD.

"**Then** the wyld thorowe the woodes went  
On every syde shear ;  
Grea-hondes thorowe the greves glent  
For to kyll thear dear."

### I.

For three consecutive mornings of a certain month of May not far distant, Blanch and I had opened our diaries to write, "Wind E. N. E."

Every body knows what that means in Boston. It means chill and grayness and drizzle; it means melancholy-shining sidewalks and puddles *à surprise* just where the foot is most confidingly planted; it means water dripping over gutters, flowing frothily from spouts, and squishing from shoes of poor folks at every step they take; it means draggled skirts, and cross looks, and influenza, and bronchitis, and a disposition to believe in the total depravity of inanimate things.

Yes; but also it means an effervescence of spirit in those rare souls, like incarnate sunshine, kindred in some sort of "Epictetus, a slave, maimed in body, an Irus in poverty, and favored by the immortals."

But—three whole days of drizzle!

On the first day, Blanch and I glanced approvingly skyward, and said, "A fine rain!" then went about that inevitable clearing out of drawers and closets and reading of old letters, which a rainy day suggests to the feminine mind.

On the second morning, we donned water-proofs and over-shoes, and boldly sallied forth, coming in later breathless, glowing, drenched, and with our hair curled up into kinks. Then, subsiding a little, we drew down the crimson curtains, lighted a fire, lighted the

gas, and, shutting ourselves into that rosy cloister, read till we were sleepy.

But sometimes water looks a great deal wetter than it does at other times; and on the third morning it looked very wet indeed. The damp, easterly gloom entered between our eyelids and penetrated to our souls. We struck our colors. Like the Sybarite who got a pain in his back from seeing some men at work in the field, we shivered in sympathy with every passing wretch.

That prince of blunderers, Sir Boyle Roche, used to say that the best way to avoid danger is to meet it plumb. Acting on that principle, Blanch and I took each a chair and a window, and, seating ourselves, stared silently in the face of the enemy.

After an hour or so, <sup>I</sup> began to feel the benefit of the baronet's prescription.

"Blanch," said I, brightening, "let's go on a lark down to Maine, to the northern part of Hancock County, to a place I know."

Blanch turned her small, white face toward me, gave me a reproachful glance out of her pale-blue eyes, then drew her shawl closer about her throat, and resumed her gaze in the face of out-doors.

I waited a moment, then pursued, "Rain in town and rain in the country are two reigns, as the histories say. Lilies shrugging up their white shoulders, and roses shaking their pink faces to get rid of the drops; trees lucent green jewels in every leaf; birds laughing and scolding at the same

time, casting bright little jokes from leafy covert to covert; brooks foaming through their channels like champagne out of bottles—"

"Never compare a greater thing to a less," interrupted Blanch, severe and rhetorical.

"So you think rain-water is better than champagne?" I asked.

"No matter. Go on with your poetics."

"At this time the apple-trees are pink clouds of incense, and the cherry-trees are white clouds of incense, the maples are on fire; there are fresh light-green sprouts on the dark-green spruces; the flaky boughs of the cedars have put forth pale, spicy buds; and the silver birches glimmer under hovering mists of green. Deer are stealing out of the woods to browse in the openings, and gray rabbits hop across the long, still road, (there is but one road.) The May-flowers are about gone; but dandelions, "spring's largess," are everywhere. Here and there is a clearing, over which the surrounding wildness has thrown a gentle savagery, like lichen over rocks. The people (there are two) live in a log house. They never get a newspaper till it is weeks old, perhaps not so soon, and they know nothing of fashion. If we should appear to them now with our skirts slinking in at the ankles, and puffing out at the waist, with chignons on our heads and hats on our noses, they would run into the house and button the doors. Every thing there is peaceful. Rumors of oppression, fraud, and war reach them not. I should not be surprised if that were one of the places where they still vote for General Jackson. Their most frequent visitors are bears, and wolves, and snappish little yellow foxes. In short, you have no idea how delightful the place is."

"I am not like the Queen of Sheba," says Blanch. "Though the

half had not been told me, my imagination would have out-built and out-hung and out-shone Solomon in all his glory. Who are these people?"

"Mr. Thomas and Mrs Sally Smith. Sally lived with my mother as help when I was a little girl. On my tenth birthday, she gave me my first smelling-bottle, purple glass with a silver-washed screw-top. The season was July, and the day very warm. After holding my precious present in my hand awhile, I opened it, and, in the innocence of my heart, took a deliberate snuff. The result beggars description. When I became capable of thought, I believed that the top of my head had been blown off. You remember in the *Arabian Nights* the bottle out of which, when it was unstopped, a demon escaped? Well, that was the same bottle. Sally used to boil molasses candy for me; and she has braided my hair and boxed my ears many a time. But mother didn't allow her to box my ears. Thomas lived in our town, and tried to support himself and make a fortune by keeping a market, but with slight success. He was always behindhand, and never got the dinner home till the cook was at the point of distraction. They called him the late Mr. Smith. By and by he and Sally got married, after a courtship something like that of Barkis and Pegotty, and went into the woods to live. My mother made and gave Sally her wedding-cake, one large loaf and four smaller ones. The large one would have been larger if my brother Dick and I hadn't got at it before it was baked and ate ever so much. Did you ever eat raw cake? It is real good. I paid Sally a visit long ago, and she made me promise to come again."

"I dare say it is all moon-shine," said Blanch, rising. "But, here goes."

"Where to?" I exclaimed.

"To pack my trunks for a visit to

Sally Smith," answered Blanch from the door-way.

"But I was in fun."

"And I am in earnest."

"And perhaps the facts are not so fair as the fancies."

"So much the worse for the facts."

With which quotation the young woman disappeared.

Resistance was useless. Blanch is one of those gentle, yielding creatures who always have their own way. And I love to be tyrannized over. I followed her up-stairs, repeating ruefully,

"Since then I never dared to be  
As funny as I can."

Catch me being poetic again!

That very evening a letter was mailed to Sally Smith, announcing our coming; and in less than a week we started, lingering over the first part of our journey, that due preparation might be made for our entertainment. The last day and a half were to be an allegro movement.

The drive from Bucksport to Ellsworth was delightful; not the beginning of it, where twelve persons were crowded into a nine-passenger coach; where Blanch, looking like a wilted flower, sat wedged between two large, determined women; where my neighbor was a restless man who was constantly trying to get something out of the coat-pocket next me; and an æsthetic man, who insisted on looking past my nose at the prospect; and a tobacco-chewing man, as his breath in my face fully testified: all this was not delightful. But after we had entertained the driver, and been assisted to a perch on the coach-roof, then it was glorious.

Then we got airy tosses instead of dislocating jolts; saw the road unwind, turn by turn, from the woods; saw how the grating brake was put to the wheel while we crept over the brow of a steep pitch, then let go

while we spun down the lower part and flew over the level.

The afternoon sun was behind us, and gilded the hills; but the hollows were full of transparent dusk with the crowding, overhanging woods. As we came up out of them, our horses strained forward to trample on a giant shadow-coach, with four shadow-horses, a shadow-driver, and two fly-away shadow-women in advance of every thing else.

Presently the boughs ceased to catch at our veils, the woods thinned and withdrew, houses appeared and multiplied, and we came out on to a long steep hill dipping to a river, whence another long steep hill rose at the other side. And built up and down, and to right and left, was a pretty town with all its white houses rose-red in the sunset. Well might it blush under our faithful eyes!

"Blanch," I said, "behold a town where, sixteen years ago, a Catholic priest almost won the crown of martyrdom. On the hill opposite, toward the south, stood the Catholic church that was burned, and the Catholic school-house that was blown up with gunpowder. There is the cottage where the priest lived. One August evening, when the sky was like a topaz with sunset, and the new moon was out, he baptized me there, and a little while after they broke his windows with stones. Further up the hill is the house from which, one rainy Saturday night, a mob of masked men dragged him. Ah well! that story is yet to be told."

## II.

### HE AND SHE.

The next morning early, we started on our last day's journey, and were driven through a rough country, the road dwindling till it seemed likely to



imitate that avenue which narrowed till it turned into a squirrel-track and ran up a tree. At five o'clock, we stopped at a farm-house, which was also post-office; and there we got a man to take us to our journey's end.

"May be you'll take this letter with you," the postmaster said. "It's for Miss Smith."

*Mrs.* is never heard in that region.

I took that letter, and gazed at it a moment in wrathful silence. There was my annunciatory epistle written to Sally Smith more than a fortnight before!

"Allah il Allah!" sighed Blanch resignedly when I held up the letter to her view.

The road over which we now drove was streaked with grass that tempted the lowered nose of our Rozinante, and graceful clusters of buttercups brushed the slow spokes of our wheels. The forest primeval shut down, solid and precipitous, at our left, and at our right the scrubby spruces clambered and straggled over the ledges with the appearance of having just stopped to look at us; and in a little while we saw through their tops a log house that stood at the head of a rocky lane. A thin wreath of smoke curled from the stone chimney, curtains of spotless whiteness showed inside the tiny hinged windows, and a luxuriant hop-vine draped all the wall next us. Not a rod back from the house, and drawn darkly against the sunset sky, was a picture very like Doré's bringing of the ark to Bethsames. A group of cattle stood there motionless, two low-bending spruce-trees unfurled their plummy branches over a square rock, and, as motionless as either, stood a tall, gaunt woman staring fixedly at us.

"Goodness gracious!" cried Blanch sharply, "the child will shoot us!"

Following her glance, I espied a tow-headed urchin of ten, may be,

whom our coming had petrified in the act of getting through the bars at the foot of the lane. Against the lower bar rested his rifle, the muzzle looking us directly in the eye.

I seized upon him and changed his aim.

"Your name is Larkin," I said accusingly.

"Yes, ma'am!" he answered in a trembling voice.

"What are you here for?"

"Ma'am sent me to borrow Miss Smith's darn'-needle," he whimpered.

"You have come four miles through the woods to borrow a darning-needle?" I demanded.

"Yes, ma'am!" he answered, eagerly pointing to a huge needle with a blue yarn which was sewed into his blue drilling shirt-front.

"Is Mrs. Sally Smith alive?" I asked solemnly.

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Does she live in this house?"

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Does any one else live here?"

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Who?"

"Mr. Smith."

"Well, set your rifle down here in the corner of the fence, and look out how you aim it another time. There! now take this letter and carry it up to Mrs. Smith, and give her my compliments, and say that we would like a reply at her earliest convenience. We may be addressed at the foot of the lane, sitting on our trunks."

As I released his arm, he shot wildly up the lane, and tumbled headlong in at the weather-porch that guarded the northern door.

In a few minutes, a woman's head appeared and took an observation, while her two hands were visible smoothing her hair and rapidly adjusting an apron. Then the whole long figure emerged. At first she walked warily, stopping once or twice

as though about to turn back; then she gave a long look, and hurried down the lane, a broad smile breaking out, token of recognition. Her voice reached me first, "Well, I do declare, I'm tickled most to death to see you!"

With the last words came a mighty grip of the hands, and Sally looked at me with eyes overflowing with tears and gladness.

Most exquisite and dignified reader, didst thou ever think, when raising to thy lips the cut-glass goblet of iced water, poured from a silver pitcher filled at a faucet supplied through a leaden pipe that in its turn is fed by miles of underground aqueduct, that thou wouldst like rather to slake thy thirst at some natural spring bubbling over mossy stones and prostrate grasses? For once or twice, may be? If so, all hail! for thou art not quite a mummy. Underneath thy social swathings still beats a faint echo of the bounding pulse of some free-born ancestor, a sheik of the desert, a dusky forest-chief, a patriarch of the tents. Trampled on, thou wilt not turn to dust, but to fire; and the papyrus is unfinished on which shall be written the story of thy life.

There have been times, too, in which thou hast thought that not only thy drink was far-fetched and no sweeter for the fetching, but that the smiles, the welcomes, the farewells, the friendships were all stale and unrefreshing. Thou hast longed for the generous love, which, while it will bear nothing from thee, will bear all things for thee; for the honest hate that carries its blade in sight, and lurks not in sly and sanctimonious speech and downcast eyes; for the noble tongue that knows not how to tell the spirit of a lie and save the letter.

Here now before me were all

these. Refreshing, *n'est ce pas?* and very delightful—for a time.

Blanch and I were whirled into the house in the midst of a tornado of welcomes, apologies, regrets, wonderings, and questions innumerable. But as we were whisked through the kitchen, I had time to see all the old landmarks; the great stone fire-place, with a mantel-piece nearly out of reach, the bed, with its bright patchwork quilt, the broom of cedar-boughs behind the door, the strip-bottom chairs, the large blocks to cke out with when more seats were needed, the rough walls, the immaculate neatness.

There were two rooms in the house, and we were suffered to sit only when we had reached the second. This was glorious with pictorial newspapers pasted over the log walls, with a Job's patience quilt on the bed, with two painted wooden chairs, and a chintz-covered divan, a rag mat on the floor, two brass candlesticks on the mantel-piece, a looking-glass six inches long, and a gay picture of a yellow-haired, praying Samuel, dressed in a blue night-gown, and kneeling on a red cushion.

Sally was so delightedly flustered by our coming that, as she said, she did not know whether she was on her head or her heels, a doubt which so sensibly affected her movements that she was every moment making little inconsequent rushes where she had no need to go, and repeating the same things over and over.

Presently she sat still with a start, and listened to a heavy step that came through the porch and into the kitchen.

"Sh-h-h! There he comes!" she whispered.

In fact, I had already caught a glimpse through the chimney-back of a man in his shirt-sleeves, who

hung up a tattered straw hat, and took down from its nail a tin wash-basin with a long handle, like a skil-let.

"Sally!" he called out, splashing a dipperful of water into the basin.

"Whot?" returned Sally, with a facetious nod at me.

"Who's been here this afternoon? I see wagon-tracks down in the road."

"Boarders!" says Sally, with another nod and wink.

"Boarders? What for?" came in a tone of amazement; and through a chink in the rock chimney I could see his wet face turned, listening for her answer, and his dripping hands suspended.

"To get boarded," replied Sally succinctly.

Such an astounding announcement required immediate explanation, and Mr. Smith was coming in a dripping state to demand one, when his wife jumped up to intercept him.

"Guess who's come!" she said, stopping him in the entry.

"Who?" he asked in a stentorian whisper.

"Mary!" says dear Sally, with a little burst of gladness that brought tears to my eyes.

"Mary who?"—with the same preposterous feint of secrecy.

"Why, bobolink Mary, you great goose!"

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Mr. Smith, and as he spoke, his face, with wide-open eyes and mouth, appeared over Sally's shoulder, then disappeared instantly at sight of Blanch. Nor would our host permit me to come to him, nor make himself visible again till he had gone through a tremendous scrubbing and brushing, all of which was perfectly audible to us. Then he came in, sleek and shining, and gave us a hearty though embarrassed welcome,

bowing before Blanch with a movement like the shutting up of a pocket-knife, and greatly confused on finding himself obliged to take her small hand.

I am bound to say that Blanch behaved exquisitely. She could not help being dainty and delicate; but she showed herself so unaffectedly delighted with every thing and every body that her daintiness was not remembered against her. Besides, she had the good taste not to try to imitate their rough ways, but remained simply herself.

Sally disappeared presently, and in a surprisingly short space of time returned to tell us, with a very red face, that supper was ready.

There was a momentary cloud of doubt over Blanch's face; but I went unfearing, and the event justified my confidence. The coarsest of delf, to be sure, and a cotton cloth, and steel forks, and a tin coffee-pot. But whatever could be polished shone like the sun, and whatever could be white was like snow. As to the supper, it was worthy of the pen of Mr. Secretary Pepys. The traditional delicacies of a country table are taken for granted; but the coffee was a glorious work of supererogation, and delicious enough to be handed about in the paradise of Mohammedans. Besides this, Sally, with a recollection of one of my mother's pretty ways, had laid a sprig of fragrant sweet-brier beside each plate, and with mine a drowsy dandelion just shutting its golden rays.

"You must excuse me for giving you deer meat," said our hostess with great humility; "I haven't any other kind on hand to-day; but to-morrow—"

She stopped short in the act of setting the dish on the table, unspeakably mortified by the incredulous stare with which Blanch regarded her.

"If you don't like it—" she began stammering.

We immediately explained that Blanch was simply astonished at an apology being offered with venison, whereat Sally grew radiant.

Mr. Smith did not appear at the table. He insisted that he had been to supper, but abstained from mentioning the day on which he last partook of that meal. Indeed, during all the time Blanch and I were in that house we never saw the master of it eat one mouthful.

"He never will sit down with folks," Sally whispered privately to me as we left the table.

When Sally said "he," pure and simple, she always meant her husband. She had a dim consciousness that there were other, nebulous masculines in the world; but to her mind Mr. Thomas Smith was the bright particular HE.

At eight o'clock we went to bed by the pure, pale twilight of June, and sank up to our eyes in feathers.

"Oh!" cried Blanch, "I'm going through to China!"

"Never mind!" I said encouragingly, "to-morrow we will put this absurd puff-ball underneath, and promote the straw-bed."

"Straw!" exclaimed a voice from the depths.

"Yes! pretty, yellow, shining straws, such as you suck mint-juleps through. Well, don't get **excited**! Straws such as your brother Tom sucks mint-juleps through. Good-night, honey!"

I heard her whisper a prayer. Then we dropped asleep peacefully; while with steadfast eyes of holy fire our angels kept watch and ward.

was a long, golden beam of sunlight stretched across the bare floor. The hop-leaves hanging over the eastern window were translucent, and more gold than green, and all round their edges hung radiant drops of dew, slowly gathering and falling.

Blanch smiled, but said nothing, scarcely spoke a word to God, even, I think, but knelt and let her prayer exhale from her, like dew from the morning earth.

The kitchen was all in order when we went out. It was shaded, exquisitely clean, swept through by a soft draught, and finely perfumed by the new cedar broom which Thomas had made that morning. In the fire-place lay a heap of hard-wood coals in a solid glow, but the heat of them all went up chimney. The table was set for two, and breakfast ready all but cooking the eggs. Sally held a bowl of these in her hand, while, outside, the hens were making loud affidavit to their freshness.

After breakfast, Blanch put on a little scarlet sack, took her parasol and went out to reconnoitre. Sally and I staid in the house and talked over old times, while she washed the dishes and I wiped them. Old times, even the happiest, are sad to recall, and we soon fell into silence. In that pause, Sally wrung out her dish-cloth, gave it a scientific shake that made it snap like a whip-lash, and hung it up on two nails to dry. Then she wiped her eyes on her sleeve.

"Land sakes!" she exclaimed, "what's that?" and rushed out doors, catching the broom on her way. I followed with the shovel, for "that" was a scream which unmistakably came from Blanch.

There was neither savage nor wild beast in sight, nor was Blanch visible; but there was a great commotion in the poultry-yard, and a large turkey-gobbler of a military appearance was

### III.

#### BIPEDS WITH FEATHERS.

The next morning the unaccustomed stillness woke us early; and there

strutting about in full feather and declaiming in some foreign language. It sounded like low Dutch. What he said seemed to make a great impression on the hens and geese, for they looked awe-struck.

Presently we espied Blanch at the very top of one of the highest board fences that ever was built, clinging for dear life.

"I don't know how I ever got here," she said piteously. "The last recollection I have is of that horrid creature ruffling himself all up and coming at me. Then I came right up. And that's all I know. But I can't get down again."

I got a little ladder and helped Blanch down from her dangerous perch, while Sally kept the turkey-gobbler at bay, standing, broom in hand, in that position called in heraldry rampant-regardant.

"He doesn't like scarlet very well," she remarked. "It isn't his favorite color."

Then we went to see Mrs. Partington, a large gray hen, which was that morning taking her first airing with a new brood. She had been set on goose-eggs, which had, naturally, hatched out goslings; but she did not know it.

"Now," said Sally, "if you want to see an astonished hen, come along."

There was a duck-pond near, and some instinct in the goslings led them that way. Mrs. Partington yielded, like a fond, indulgent mother, and clucked along full of *naïve* consequence and good-nature. But at a little distance from the margin she paused, called her brood about her, and began to talk to them in a gray, comfortable, complacent voice. I suppose she was telling them how dangerous water is. They listened first with one side of their heads, then with the other, and two of them

winked at each other, and made little irresistible shies toward the pond. They looked like green eggs on two sticks. The hen left off her lecture, clucked loudly, spread her wings, and ran after them. But the next instant a shriek broke from her bill; for, as every body knows, of course, the goslings all plunged headlong into the pond.

Poor Mrs. Partington was, indeed, an astonished hen. She was more: she was a transfixed hen. She stood gazing at them in horror, evidently expecting to see every one of them keel over and go to the bottom. But no; the little voyagers floated about quite at their ease, striking out with their tiny paddles, their downy backs and absurd little heads shedding the water beautifully.

"She must know now that they are goslings," said Blanch.

"Goslings? Not she!" answered Sally. "Or, ten to one she thinks that she is a goose. No, that hen will go down to the platter without finding out that she has been cheated."

We had a busy day. We went to see the frame-house that Mr. Smith had begun to raise, and Sally's dairy in the cellar of it; we promoted our straw-bed, filled our fireplace with pine boughs, thus cutting off the view through the chimney-back; unpacked our trunks and set up our graven images; and, when sunset was near, went out into the woods at the foot of Spruce Mountain to get a pail of water from a little *Johannisberger* of a spring there. The mountain was between us and the sunset, and the woods were in shadow; but up over the lofty tree-tops the red and golden lights floated past, and every little pool, among its treasures of reflected foliage, airy nest of bird, and bending flower, held warmly its bit of azure sky, and crimson or golden cloud.

Presently we came to where, at the foot of a spruce-tree, our spring lay like a fire-opal, with that one spark down among its haunting shadows. A cool green darkness fell into it from the over-hanging boughs, velvet mosses growing close rimmed it with a brighter emerald, gray of trunk, branch, and twig melted into it, milky little flowers nodded over at their milky little twins below, and in the midst burned that live coal of the sunset. When we plunged our tin pail into this spring, it was as though we were going to dip up jewels. But instantly we touched the water, it whitened all over with a silvery-rippled mail, the colors disappeared, and we brought up only crystal clearness. The next moment, though, the throbbing waters subsided, and the many-tinted enchantment stole tremulously back again.

When we went to bed that night, a shower was prowling about the horizon, and over on Spruce Mountain the wolves were howling back defiance to the thunders.

What a lovely, savage week it was that followed! Somewhere in it was dissolved a Sunday; but we were scarcely aware of it, there was so little to mark the day.

In that week we learned one fact that was new to us, and that was the profound melancholy that reigns in the woods. Looking back, we could recollect that the impression had always, though unconsciously, been the same. Is it that in the forest Pan alone is the chosen god? and that there is still mourned that day when

"The parting genius was with sighing rent."

Or is the sadness because He who once came down to walk among the trees, and call through the dews, comes no more?

Whatever may be the reason, melancholy is enthroned in the forest.

## IV.

## A DIAMOND-WASHING.

On one of those days, Blanch and I, after a severe dispute on the subject with Sally, did a washing. Sally said we shouldn't; but wash we would, and wash we did.

We rose at early white dawn, kilted up our wrappers, shouldered our clothes-bag, took soap, matches, and kindlings, and started. A path led us past the new frame-house and a grove beyond it to the wash-room. This was a noble apartment about forty rods long by thirty wide, and was walled in by cedar and pine columns with the branches and foliage left on, a great improvement on Solomon's building. The cornice was delicately traced against a pale-blue ceiling frescoed with silver, the most beautiful ceiling I have ever seen. The carpet was a green velvet pile, thickly diapered with small gold-colored and white flowers in an irregular pattern, and beaded all over with crystals. Near the door by which we entered was one of the most charming imitations of rustic scenery to be found at home or abroad. A huge granite boulder, broken and hollowed roughly, had a thread of sparkling water bubbling up through a rift in it, and overflowing its basin in a rivulet. Near this stood two forked poles with a large copper kettle suspended from a cross-pole. Underneath the kettle were the ashes of more than one fire. Countless birds flew about, singing as well as if they had been sent to Paris. On the whole, it was a picture which would have drawn a crowd at any exhibition.

Wood was there, covered from the dew with green boughs. We placed our kindlings, lighted them with a match scraped inside Blanch's slip-

per, and soon a blue column of smoke was rising straight into the morning air, and the flames were growing. Then we filled the great kettle with water from the fountain of Arethusa, and, as soon as it was warm, began to wash. For one hour there was nothing but silence and scrubbing; then a loud war-whoop through Sally's hands announced that breakfast was ready. By that time our clothes were all washed and bubbling in the boiler. Looking about then, we saw that every cedar pillar had a golden capital; cloth of gold was spread here and there in long stretches, and the frescoes had changed their shape, and, instead of silver, were rosy and golden.

Poor Sally, looking at us ruefully when we went in, asked to see our hands. They were worth looking at, all the skin being off the backs of them, and the insides puckered up into the most curious and complex wrinkles. We ate with glorious appetites, though, had another engagement with Sally, who wanted us to lie down to rest, and have our hands bandaged, and went back to find our clothes wabbling clumsily, but quite to our satisfaction. We upset our tubs and rinsed them, then set them up and filled with cold water again. Next we took each a clothes-stick, fished something from the kettle with it, ran with it boiling hot at the stick's end, and soured it into one of the tubs. We had to run a good many times, probably a mile in all. We squeezed the clothes out of this pickle, called by the initiated "boiled suds;" refilled our tubs, and performed that last operation of rinsing, which took the puckered insides quite out of our hands, leaving them almost innocent of cuticle.

"My dear," said Blanch, as we spread our washing out on the green, "every woman on earth ought to do

one washing. It would do their souls good, though it should temporarily damage their bodies. My laundress is a new being to me from this day. I mean to double her wages."

"Oh!" she exclaimed suddenly, and held up the bleeding forefinger of her left hand. "My ring! I have lost it; it is washed away."

The poor child looked distressed, and no wonder; for the missing cluster was a *souvenir*.

We set ourselves to search, but in vain. On each side of our grassy bench, three tubs of water had been spilt, and had wandered in devious ways, and to some distance. We sawed our sore fingers on the notched edges of the grass-blades, to no purpose.

"It was careless of you, Blanch," I said austere. "You should have recollected that the ring was loose—"

A twinkle appeared in Blanch's eyes, if not on her finger. I followed the direction of her significant glance, and behold! where the lambent *solitaire* had burned on my hand, was an aching void!

"My angel," said Blanch sweetly, "did you ever hear of diamond-washings?"

## V.

### A MISS IS AS GOOD AS A MILE.

When Sunday came round a second time, we were aware of it. Every day had been to us like a crystal brimming cup overflowing to quench the day's thirst; but looking out into this Sunday, we saw only a golden emptiness.

Tears hung on Blanch's long eyelashes. "Think of all the blessed open church-doors," she said. "It makes me home-sick. I want to go to mass. Even a fiddling, frescoed, full-dress mass would be better than none."

I quoted my friend, Sir Boyle Roche, 'Can a man be like a bird, in two places at once?' Besides, little one, if you were in town, it is not unlikely that you might stay at home all day because your new hat was not becoming, or because of the hot sun, or the east wind, or the mud, or the dust."

The dear child blushed. "But then one likes to know that one can go," she said meekly.

Sally and her husband were going five miles to meeting that day. They started early; and we watched them go soberly off in single file till the trees hid first the large brim of Sally's preposterous bonnet, then the crown of Mr. Smith's antique hat. Then we went in and prepared a little altar, with a statuette of the Virgin, a crucifix, candles and flowers, and, lifting up our hearts in that wild solitude, assisted at some far-away mass. There was no interruption, only a group of deer stood without, at the distance of a stone's throw, as motionless as gray marble statues, and watched us with soft, intent eyes. After we had got through and were sitting silently, the candles still burning, some Roman Catholic humming-birds dashed in and sucked the honey out of the wild roses we had given our Lady, but left a sweet thought instead. When the buzz of their wings was gone, we heard robins and a bobolink outside, and a chorus of little twitterers singing a *Laudate*. "Amen!" said Blanch. The unclouded sunlight steeped the surrounding forest in sultry splendor, and clouds of perfume rose, like incense, from pine, and fir, and hemlock, from thousands of little blossoms, from plots of red and white clover, heavy with honey, from censers of anemones, and, threading all these sweets of sound, perfume, and sight together, was the bubbling voice

of a brook murmuring Paters and Aves over its pebbles.

Blanch smiled, and repeated softly:

- "The waters all over the earth rejoice  
In many a hushed and silvery voice;  
'In Jordan we covered Him, foot and crown,  
While the dove of the Spirit came fluttering down.
- "We steadied his keel at the crowded beach,  
When the multitude gathered to hear him teach;  
The feet of our Master we smoothly bore,  
And he walked the sea as a paven floor.
- "When the tempest lashed each foamy crest,  
At his 'Peace, be still!' we sank to rest.  
And we laughed into wine, when he came to see  
The marriage in Cana of Galilee.'
- "The stars that fade in the growing day  
Have each a tremulous word to say;  
'We sang, we sang, as we hung above  
The lowly cradle of Infinite Love.'
- "The low winds whisper, 'We fanned in his hair  
The flame of an unseen aureole there.'  
And the lily, pallid with rapture, cries,  
'I blanched in the light of his fervent eyes!'
- "Voices of earth and air unite,  
Voices of day and voices of night,  
Flinging their memories into the way  
Of the coming in of the dear Lord's day.
- "O Christ! we join with them to bless  
Thy name in love and thankfulness;  
And cry as we kneel before thy throne,  
We are all thine own! we are all thine own!"

When Sally and Mr. Smith came home that afternoon, they were accompanied by a tall, stiff, severe man in black, at the first sight of whom Blanch and I got our hats for a walk. It was Elder Samson, come up to convert the idolaters. We knew well what hydra-headed discourse he had prepared to devour our patience, our charity, our civility even. Discretion was the better part of valor, we concluded, and fled, leaving, alas! the statuette of our Lady, with the candles burning beside her, and the wild roses clinging about and kissing her feet. If we had but known! But we did not then, nor till long afterward. When we came back, everything was, apparently, as we had left it. But, when Sally came to town in the fall, she told how, the moment the elder saw our graven image, he flew into a holy rage, flung it, roses and all, out the window, and would



have flung the candles after it, if she had not rescued them by main force. The result was an illustration of the church militant, in which rather high words passed between Sally and the elder. Mr. Smith, feebly interposing to take the part of his clerical visitor, was routed utterly.

But meantime, in happy unconsciousness, Blanch and I walked down the road, and down and down the road, a mile, and another mile, and again a mile, through the green and flowery solitude, flecked and flickering with sunlight and shadow, the silence only softly stirred by a multitudinous rustling of leaves. Now and then we saw a deer by the roadside; and far away in the woods the foxes snarled and barked.

Our walk ended on a long log that bridged a brook, and there we stood and looked up to see the waters come down to us. Presently, instead of their flowing down, we seemed to float up. We were going up to the cradle of this dancing stream, to some enchanted land where the baby rivulet first saw the sun. We were going back, also, to our own childhood, floating up and up to careless days, leaving the heavy years behind.

When we came back from that far-away country, a little sea-sick with our journey, I turned to see Blanch looking at me with great attention.

"My dear," she said, "you are the most absurd figure I recollect to have seen in the whole course of my life. If it were not deplorable that human taste should be so perverted, I should find you ludicrous."

"So you have found it out," I replied, highly edified. "I have been thinking the same of you this week past. Of course any one with eyes can see that Sally in her straight gown and big apron, with her hair in a pug, is better dressed than we."

Blanch had brought Mr. Smith's

pistol with her. She always took it when we went into the woods; for she considered herself a pretty good shot. She had at home a pasteboard target full of little holes, the best one about six inches from the centre, all made by shots fired by her at a distance of twenty feet.

She felt safer to take the pistol, she said; for if any animal were to attack us, she could be sure to wound if not to kill it. "No animal," she argued very sensibly, "could be dangerous at a distance of twenty feet or more. And if he should come within that, I could not fail hitting pretty near his head or heart. You see, I missed only six inches in the shooting-gallery, and a bear or a wolf would be much larger than my target."

When you want to convince others, always speak as though your proposition is unquestionable. Every body knows that the majority of persons in the majority of cases find it troublesome to think for themselves, and that if you are positive enough, you can make them believe any thing. If Blanch had been a shade less logical and decided, I might have submitted that a pasteboard target does not pounce upon you and hug you to death, or tear you into inch pieces while you are taking aim, and that with a wild live creature to glare back with two great threatening eyes into her one blue eye looking at him, like a murderous violet, over the pistol-barrel, her nerves might be shaken to the extent of another six inches from the mark. But her air was one of such perfect conviction that my subjunctive case expired without a sigh.

The tree-tops were still full of sunshine when we started to go home, but the road was shaded. Blanch seemed a little uneasy.

"I believe we'd be awful good to eat," she said apprehensively.

Even in speaking, she stopped short, I stopped, we stopped all two, as the French say. Directly in front of us and not far away, sitting with an air of deliberation in the middle of the road, was a large, clumsy, shaggy beast that looked at us with an inexplicable expression. I had never had the pleasure of an introduction to this animal, but none was needed. I had seen his portrait on the outside of hair-oil bottles. The resemblance was striking.

Blanch turned very red, and raised her pistol.

"Shall I fire?" asked the little heroine in a stage-whisper.

"Fire!"

Her hand was trembling like a leaf in the wind; but she took beautiful aim, and I am bound to confess that her pasteboard target could not have received the attention with more unmoved tranquillity. The pistol went hard, though, and the pull she had to give the trigger brought the muzzle down, so that instead of the shot striking within six inches of the bear's heart or brain, it struck up a little puff of dust, and took off the devoted head of a buttercup about five feet from us.

"Have I hit him?" she asked breathlessly, opening her eyes. She had shut them very tight on firing.

She had not hit him; but he took the hint, and got himself clumsily out of the way. I thought he acted as though his feelings were hurt.

I have forgotten whether we ran. I am inclined to think that we did not. But we were not long in getting home, and then the elder was gone.

## VI.

### HOMESICK.

A pathetic little incident happened that week, which suggested many thoughts to us. Passing by a cleared

space in the woods one afternoon, Mr. Smith saw a deer family quietly grazing there. Plentiful as these creatures were in that region, they never suffered a near approach; but this group looked at the intruder peacefully and showed no sign of alarm.

Is there on earth an animal more fierce and cruel than man in deed if not in intention? This man did not deliberately mean to perpetrate a fiendish act; but no otherwise could what he did be characterized. He did not want the venison, the skins, the graceful antlers; but he fancied it rather a fine thing to have that bounding target still for a moment. His rifle was over his shoulder; he lowered it, and took aim at the stag's stately front. There was a report; the creature gave one leap into the air, then fell, shot through the forehead.

Not even then did the others fly. While he loaded his rifle again, they bent over their prostrate companion, touching him, moved by what mute, incredulous grief, who can say? The marksman gleefully took aim again, and the doe fell with a bullet through her heart, and sobbed her life away. When Mr. Smith saw the young one put its head down to the mother's, for the first time some compunction touched his coarse, unsympathetic soul. But he had gone too far to retreat, and in a few minutes the fawn lay dead beside its mother.

Sally reproached her husband passionately when he told her the story of his wonderful feat.

"If dumb creatures were like men," she said, "the wild beasts would get up a mob to-night, and come here and lynch us; and not be to blame either!"

Blanch and I left Mr. Smith meekly taking his castigation, and went out to see his victims.

They lay where they had fallen, on the greensward, poor creatures! a

sad blot upon the peaceful scene, their innocent, happy lives quite ebbd away. We stood by them a little while in the sunny silence, and it seemed as though every thing living shrank from us. We had never before been out without seeing some form of that wild animal life with which the woods were teeming. But now there was no sound of skittish steps evading us, no glimpse of shadowy figures among the trees. All was silent and dead.

We went to the roadside, and,

seating ourselves on the moss under an aspen-tree, mourned silently.

Blanch half reclined, leaning on her elbow, and her face looked like a pale flame in the flickering shadow of the tree above us. She stretched her hand, and touched tenderly a lovely spray of partridge berry that trailed over the moss, but did not break it. Then she looked up.

"Minnie," she said, "I'm home-sick."

"So am I."

"When will we start?"

"To-morrow."

## THE WILLIAN GIRLS.

SOME persons have a natural enjoyment of tribulation. They take a real pleasure in raising their eyebrows lugubriously, holding their heads a little on one side with a sorrowful and resigned expression, and looking at the world through blue spectacles. They "always sigh in thanking God," and can find a cloud in the sunniest sky. You can never conquer such people on their own ground. If you have a slight pain in your little finger, they have an excruciating pain in their thumb; if you have caught your robe on a nail, theirs has been rent on a spike; if you have been wet in a shower, they have been soaked in a torrent. These persons have minor voices, make great use of chromatics in speaking, and their affections seem to be situated in the liver.

Mr. Christopher Willian had a taint of this "green and yellow melancholy" in his disposition, and his rapidly increasing family gave full scope for its development.

"If Eva were a boy, now," he sighed, "I could soon have some

one to help me in the shop. But —nothing but girls."

"Eva is a treasure!" Mrs. Willian answered stoutly. "I wouldn't exchange her for the best boy in the world."

"But girls are so expensive," the father objected, "and they can't earn anything; that is, mine can't. I don't want a daughter of mine to leave my house till she marries."

"And there is no need of their doing anything, my dear," the mother replied cheerfully. "We own our house, and your business is very good. Then, when the mortgages are paid off on your building, the rent of the upper flats will make us quite independent. In three or four years we shall be out of the wood, al' ur pinching and toiling over."

Mrs. Willian was a thrifty, clear-headed, energetic woman; but, though she would not have owned it, she herself found the prospect appalling. As she sat there after her husband left her, she glanced out of the chamber window and saw Dinah, the one servant of the

house, putting out the washing, her accusing face looming darkly over the interminable line of wet dry-goods. Oh! the strings to tie, the buttons to button, the hooks to hook! And here on her knees lay another candidate for such services, an unconscious little affliction of two weeks old! Oh! the rents and rips to mend, the darnings and makings over, the little faces to wash and locks to comb, the faults to chide, the teasings to bear, the questions to answer! She had just got a glimpse through the door of Eva with her hair in a snarl, and of Helen with soiled stockings on; she knew that Frances had tumbled down-stairs and set her nose bleeding; she could hear Annie crying pathetically for mother to come and rock her to sleep, and she was almost sure that everything was at sixes and sevens in the kitchen.

"But I will not lose my courage!" she exclaimed vehemently, and, in proof that she would not, burst into hysterical weeping.

The fifth girl grew apace, and after her came Josephine, and after Josephine came Jane.

"Mr. Willian is among the blessed," said the priest when this seventh daughter was carried to him for baptism. "*Verily, he shall not be confounded when he shall speak to his enemies in the gate.*"

Others besides the priest had their jest concerning this regiment of girls. Tradesmen smiled when purchases were made for them, people laughed and counted when invitations were to be sent to them, neighbors went to their windows to see the Willian procession start

for church. They became proverbial, especially with their father.

But as years passed, words of praise began to drop in among the jests. Mothers marvelled to see how early the Willian girls learned to sew and mend, how deftly they could use the broom and duster, what womanly ways the elder had toward the younger. These mothers reproachfully told their shiftless daughters what a dignified and careful maiden Miss Eva was, and how even Anne could put a room to rights after the smaller fry, and sing Jenny to sleep with a voice like a bobolink's. For all these children took to singing as naturally as birds do, and warbled before they could speak.

Nor were their happy hearts less valuable in the house than their helpful hands. Half the mother's load of care melted from her in the brightness of their faces, and the anxious cloud on Mr. Christopher Willian's brow lightened in spite of him whenever some gushing sprite, all laughter and kisses, ran to welcome him home. He was sometimes vexed on recollecting how he had been lured from a good grumble by their baby wiles. Indeed, he was not nearly so dissatisfied as he pretended to be. Such sweet and healthy affections as theirs were, which, never having been checked, flowed out in joyous innocence; such pure, unerring instincts, that needed no knowledge of baseness in order to shrink from its contact; such open hands for the poor, such tender hands for the afflicted; and, crowning all, such stead-

fast, unassuming piety. Among the young ladies who, dressed to attract attention, promenaded the public streets, the Willian girls were never found; their father's house was the place where they made new acquaintances and entertained old ones. And what did they conceal from their parents? Nothing. Their hopes and plans and fears, their mistakes, their faults, all were freely told. And how pretty they were! Their father secretly made the most flowery comparisons when looking at them. He mentally challenged the dew-washed morning roses and violets to vie with their fresh faces around the breakfast table. When at evening they formed a ring of bloom around the piano, and sang for their parents, or for visitors, his private opinion was, that a choir of angels could not far excel them; and when the circle broke, like a wreath falling into flowers, and each went about some pretty employment, then Mr. Willian had not eyes enough with which to watch his seven girls. But once down to any such feeling, and there would be an end to his privilege of grumbling. He well knew what a chorus would assail his first grievance: "Why, papa, you said that we were—" etc.; or, "Now, Mr. Willian, do be consistent! With my own ears I have heard you say—" etc. So he wrapped the silver lining of his cloud inward, and showed them only the gray.

But one evening, for a wonder, he came home with a joyful face and no word of fault-finding. When Jenny, the youngest, ran to meet him, he gave her a toss nearly to the ceiling; he gave one of Fanny's curls a pull in passing her; he presented his wife with a bunch of late flowers, he praised every thing on the supper-table. Finally, when they were gathered in the evening, he told them the cause of this unusu-

al hilarity. He had that day made the last payment on the building in which he had his shop, and now their weary economies were at an end.

"But don't imagine, you young witches, that all this is to go in finery," he said, giving the nearest one a pinch on the cheek. "The house here needs a little fitting up, and perhaps we will have a new piano. But I must begin now to lay by something. A man with such a load of girls on his shoulders has to think of the future."

They were too much accustomed to remarks like the last to be greatly disturbed by them, but this threw a momentary dampening. Then the silence was broken by Miss Eva's calm and musical voice: "The house needs to be painted and papered and furnished from basement to attic. It is very shabby."

Mr. Willian forgot to exclaim at the dimensions of this proposition when he looked in the fair face of his eldest daughter, and saw the serene grace with which she seated herself beside her mother, and smoothed down the folds of her dress. Eva was now twenty, calm, blonde, and stately.

"O papa!" cried Florence across the fireplace; "do buy a lovely landscape of Weber's we saw to-day. It is just what we want to put over the mantel-piece in the front parlor."

Again the father looked, but said nothing.

Florence was a girl of artistic tastes, was frail and excitable, and had brilliant violet eyes and an unsteady scarlet in her cheeks.

"Now at last I can have a watch!" cried Frances in a ringing voice. "I've nearly got a curvature of the spine from looking round at the clock to see if I have practised long enough."

"My dear Fanny," interposed her mother, "we need a new set of china much more than you need a watch."

Frances was the romp of the family, a large girl of sixteen, with heaps of brown curls around a *piquante* face.

"I wish I had a little rosewood writing-desk and a pearl pen-handle," came in a clear, insinuating voice very high up the scale. Anne sat in a low chair, with her chin in her hand, her elbow on her knee, and her gaze fixed intently on the cornice of the room. But perceiving no notice taken of her remark, she lowered her glance, and gave her father a look out of the corners of her eyes, which thereby got the appearance of being nearly all whites.

Anne was fourteen years of age, and had a quiet way of doing as she pleased and getting all she wanted without seeming to try. Frances called her pussy-cat.

"O papa!" broke in Georgiana, "can't I have a pair of skates and learn to skate?"

"I want a silver mug!" cried Jane, the youngest, striking in before Josephine.

Josephine sat in the shadow of her father's chair, and had two small wrinkles between her brows.

"Is there any thing else any one will have?" asked Mr. Willian with excessive politeness, after having caught breath. "Don't be bashful, I beg! It is a pity there are only seven of you, with your mother making eight. Possibly by putting a mortgage on the house, I may be able to gratify your wishes. Speak up—do!"

Ever so slight a cloud settled upon the gentleman's audience as he glanced over them, bowing suavely, and rubbing his hands with an appearance of great cordiality.

"Papa!" came in a little voice out of the shadow. Every one had forgotten Josephine.

A real smile melted the waxen mask of a smile on Mr. Willian's face. "Poor Josie!" he said.

She came out of her corner and stood by his side. "Papa, have you got the block insured?" she asked.

Her father colored suddenly as he put his arm about the child and drew her closer to him. "Here girls," he said, "is one who thinks of the means as well as the end. She never will ruin any one by her extravagance."

"But have you, papa?" she persisted.

"This house is all right, dear; and I'm going to insure the store to-morrow."

He spoke carelessly, but there was a slight stir of uneasiness perceptible beneath.

His wife looked at him with surprise. "Why, father, how happened you to let it run out?"

"I was so busy to-day I forgot all about it," he said almost pettishly. "The policy expired only yesterday. I'll see to it the first thing in the morning. Go and sing something, girls."

All but Josie gathered about the piano, and sang one of William Blake's songs:

"Can I see another's woe,  
And not be in sorrow too?  
Can I see another's grief,  
And not seek for kind relief?"

"Can I see a falling tear,  
And not feel my sorrow's share?  
Can a father see his child  
Weep, nor be with sorrow filled?"

"Can a mother sit and hear  
An infant groan, an infant fear?  
No, no I never can it be;  
Never, never can it be!"

"And can He, who smiles on all,  
Hear the wren with sorrows small,  
Hear the small bird's grief and care,  
Hear the woes that infants bear,

"And not sit beside the nest  
Pouring pity in their breast?  
And not sit the cradle near,  
Weeping tear on infant's tear?"

"And not sit both night and day,  
Wiping all our tears away?  
Oh! no; never can it be;  
Never, never can it be!"

"He doth give his joy to all;  
He becomes an infant small,  
He becomes a man of woe,  
He doth feel the sorrow too."

In the midst of the last soft strain Eva's hands paused on the keys, her sisters ceased singing, and her father and mother lifted their faces to listen; for a loud gamut of bells outside had run up the first stroke of the fire-alarm. At the last stroke, Mr. Willian started up and went into the entry for his hat. Not a word was said as he went out; but the girls gathered about their mother, and stood with the breath just hovering on their lips, counting the alarm over and over, hoping against hope. But, no; they had counted rightly at first. The loud clear strokes through that silence left no room for doubt.

The girls drew nearer their mother, their faces losing color.

"I can't bear the suspense, Eva," she said. "Get our bonnets, and we will go down-town. Don't cry, Josie! You children all stay here and say the rosary while we are gone. We will soon be back, and perhaps we shall bring good news."

Florence took her beads from her pocket, put her arm around the weeping Josie, and drew her down to her knees before their mother's chair. Mrs. Willian glanced back as the others knelt too, then shut the door, breathing a blessing on them. "If it should be God's will to spare us now," she said, "I shall be the happiest mother in the world."

It was not God's will to spare them, she soon found. As they turned the last corner and came in sight of Mr. Willian's building, they saw it the centre of a vast crowd, firemen, volunteer workers, and lookers-on. There was no appearance of fire in the lower stories, but smoke was gushing through all the interstices of the upper windows.

Mrs. Willian wrung her hands and turned away. "There go the savings and toil of a lifetime!" she said.

It was impossible for the firemen

to work well at that height, and the flames were creeping to the air. In a few minutes the smoke reddened, a little tongue of flame crept through a crevice, broadened, and the fire burst forth. No effort could stay it. Leisurely descending from floor to floor, it carried all before it. A thread of smoke in a corner of the ceiling, a tiny flame, and soon the whole room would be an intolerable brightness with masses of falling flaming timbers.

At midnight the family were all at home again; Mr. Willian lying half-senseless upon a sofa, his wife and children ministering to him. In his frantic efforts to save something from the burning building, one of his arms had been broken by the falling bricks.

Those were sorrowful days that followed, verifying the proverb that it never rains but it pours. Josephine was taken ill the week after the fire; but she was sure to be well soon, they said. She was not very ill. There was a little cough, a little fever, and a great weakness. The girls thought not much of it. They were too much engaged, indeed, attending to their father, and doing an immense deal of mysterious outside business.

"If Eva were only a boy!" sighed the father weakly. "A boy of twenty could earn a good salary."

"Father," Eva began very decidedly, "a girl of twenty can earn a good salary. Let me tell you what your good-for-nothing daughters are going to do. We haven't been idle the fortnight past. I am to take immediate charge of a class in the N—— school, with a salary of five hundred dollars to begin with, and a yearly advance. I shall stay at home, by your leave, and nearly all my money will go toward the housekeeping expenses. Besides that, I have a music class of four. So much for me. I doubt if that wonderful son would



spare you more out of his earnings. Florence is to take a few more lessons in Indian-ink from Mr. Rudolf, and he says that in four or five weeks she will be able to earn ten dollars a week, painting photographs. Frances has got tatten and crochet-work to do for Blake Brothers, and they promise to pay her well. She does such work beautifully. Anne is to cut out paper bordering for Mr. Sales, who is building blocks upon blocks of houses. He says that he will keep her busy three months. Georgiana is to help mother about the house, and Dinah is going away. So now, father, you can lie on your sofa and rest, and your troublesome daughters will not let you starve."

Miss Eva ended with her cheeks very red, and her head very high in the air. But her pride softened immediately when she saw her father's quivering lips, that vainly attempted to speak.

"It is our turn now, dear papa," she said, kissing him; "and we are quite proud and eager to begin. You have cast your bread upon the waters in former times; now you must lie still and see it float back to you."

"What can I do?" asked a weak little voice from the arm-chair where Josie reclined.

"You can see which will get well the most quickly, you or papa," Mrs. Willian said, bending with tearful eyes to caress the child. In this careful little one she saw embodied all the unconfessed sadness and anxiety of the one despondent period of her life. Poor Josie was the scape-goat on whose frail shoulders had been laid her mother's doubts and fears, and her father's selfish complaining.

Success almost always attends brave and cheerful effort, and the Willian girls succeeded. Besides, they were heroines in their way, and every one

was sympathizing and helpful to them. But for their father's depression, they would have been happier than ever before. At last they were of use, and not only of use, but necessary. They were no longer a burden tenderly but complainingly borne, but they bore the family cares and labors on their own young shoulders. What wonderful consultations they held, what plans they laid, what economies they practised! What latent administrative powers were developed at the hour of need, and what superlative managers they proved themselves to be! How elastic a little money could be made when smoothed out by such coaxing taper fingers, and shone upon by such bright and careful eyes! Besides, they could not see but that they lived as well as ever. Their breakfasts and dinners and suppers were as good, and their home was the same.

"Half the pleasure of wealth is in the consciousness of possessing it," said Florence philosophically. "Was it John Jacob Astor who said that all he had from his riches was food and lodging? Well, we have that. Of course it is a pity that papa's arm is still bad, though it gives him time to develop his capacity for novels. What! ascetical works are they? Yes; but I have seen novels too, papa. And here's a new one for you. Take it easy. Just lie there and make believe that you have become so rich that you have retired from business. Oh! what blocks of houses you have. What ships, what lands, what bank-stock! Isn't it weary to think what heaps of money you have to spend and give away. Don't let's think about it!"

"I came past the ruins of the fire to-day, papa," Eva said, seating herself by his sofa, and looking at him with her calm, sweet eyes. "At first I was so foolish as to shrink and turn

my head away, but the next moment I looked. And I thought, papa, that may be what has seemed to us a calamity may turn out a great blessing. We had built a good many hopes into that brick and mortar, and instead of the fire destroying, perhaps it has only purified them." Seeing that tears came into his eyes, she added hastily, "Fanny was with me, and, of course, took a grotesque view of the affair. She said that row of tall buildings, with ours gone, looked like somebody who had lost a front tooth."

Mr. Willian smiled faintly, but could answer nothing to their cheerful talk. Even while it comforted him, it made him feel bitterly ashamed of himself. Besides, he was very anxious about Josie.

It came upon them like a thunder-bolt: Josie was dying! They could scarcely believe the doctor, or the evidence of their own senses. They hoped against hope. There was no definable disease; but the child was dying merely because, instead of having had a healthy, careless childhood, and time to learn gradually that life is not all joy and sunshine, her infant eyes had looked too early upon the cross of pain, and she had seen the shadow and felt the weight of it before she could understand its consolation.

"That'll make one less, papa," she said faintly, looking up with faded eyes as he bent over her.

"One less what, my dear?"

"One less girl to support," says Josie.

The father's face sank to the pillow. Oh! what a bitter punishment for his selfish complainings, when his own child, in dying out of his arms, thought only that she was ridding him of a burden! He could scarcely find words in which to sob out his love, his regrets, his entreaties that her tender spirit might be spared at least long enough to witness his expiation. But even while he prayed it escaped him. He clasped only a frail waxen form that answered no kiss, uttered no more any childish, plaintive word.

"God forgive me!" he said. "Now I know what real loss is; and I deserve it."

How they missed the careful, pathetic little face! How often they became suddenly speechless when, in laying their plans—they found that they had unconsciously included Josie! But they worked on bravely in spite of pain—worked the better for it, indeed. And when in after-years, all happy and prosperous and with homes of their own, they talked over the past, and Mr. Willian told of the wonderful time when his daughters had made caryatides of themselves to support the edifice of his fallen fortunes, Josie was gratefully mentioned as the noblest helper there. "For it was by her means that the cornerstone of our new home was laid in heaven," he said.

## WHAT DOCTOR MARKS DIED OF.

SOME one at our camp-fire had chanced to mention Dr. Marks, which called forth the comment that the doctor had died of heart-disease — been found dead in his bed.

Major Arnold lifted his dark, bright eyes from dreaming over the coals, and looked steadily at the last speaker. "Died of heart-disease?" he repeated, with a slightly sceptical inflection.

"Yes, sir!"—very positively.

The major looked into the fire, again, and thoughtfully thriddled his beard through his fingers, while he appeared to weigh the pros and cons of some impulse in his mind. The pros tilted the beam, and the major spoke. But he first drew his hand down across his eyes, and swept away, with that pass, the present scene of myriad tents, ghostly-white in the moonlight, or shining crimson in the light of scattered fires; of closely-crowding, shadow-haunted southern crags and forests that lifted themselves from our feet to the horizon, their black and ragged rim standing boldly out against a sky that was flooded with the mellow radiance of the full moon, all its stars and all its purple swamped in that silent and melancholy tide.

"Poor Anne Atherton!" I had not thought that our rough major could speak so softly. "I had been going to the door every day, for weeks, to ask how she was, hoping in spite of the doctors. But one morning, when I reached the steps, I saw a strip of crape tied round the bell-knob. No need of questions that day. Poor little Anne was gone!

"I call her little; but she was eighteen, and well-grown. It is only a fond way of intimating that she crept into all our hearts. People liked her for her honest beauty, her ready smile, and her cheerful voice. Anne was not one of your bilious-sublime sort, but a strong, sweet, sensible girl, with an apple-blossom complexion and a clear conscience. Her family were old friends of mine, and Anne was engaged and about to be married to my particular crony—John Sharon—one of the best fellows that ever trod shoe-leather. Poor John! My heart ached for him as I went down-town that day.

"There's a little Scottish poem that reminded me, the first time I read it, of John Sharon's loves and hates:

"Tweed said to Till,  
"What gars ye rin sae still?"  
Till said to Tweed,  
"Though ye rin wi' speed,  
And I rin slaw,  
Whar ye droon ae man,  
I droon twa."

"The current of John's feelings was like the current of Till river.

"That evening I went up to the house with my arms full of white flowers. Minnie Atherton wanted me to go in to see her sister; but I hesitated. I had always disliked to look at a corpse, and I hated to lose from my mind the picture it held of that rosy-cheeked girl, and take in its place ever so fair an image of death.

"She looks very peaceful," Minnie said tearfully, seeing my unwillingness. 'And you may be able to comfort John. We can't get him away from her.'

"I never was much at comforting people. All that I know how to say

to a crying woman is, 'Now, don't, my dear!' and to a crying man I couldn't utter a word. Since then I have marched up to a battery with less shaking of the nerves than I felt on that day when I went into the darkened room where Anne Atherton lay dead, and John Sharon sat looking at her. There were no tears in his eyes, there was no trembling in his lip or voice. He looked as though he had so long gazed upon and studied that face of hers that his own had learned the secret of its frozen calm. I could not tell which of the two was whiter.

"How beautiful she was! There was still a faint pink in her lips; but where that marvellous rich color had bloomed in the cheeks, and a fainter tint in the small ears and rounded chin, there was now only pure white. But that pallor revealed many an exquisite outline which had been unnoted when her color dazzled the eyes. Her head was turned aside, with one hand under the cheek, and her long, fair hair was put back from the face, and lay in shining ripples down her shoulders and back. She wore her bridal dress and veil, some filmy, frosty stuff, that looked as though it might melt, being so near the cluster of candles that burned at her head. There was no light in the room but from those candles.

"Minnie scattered my flowers over her sister's hair **and** dress. 'I am glad that you brought tuberoses,' she said, 'Anne always loved them.'

"A long, slow sigh heaved John Sharon's breast. He carefully took up one of the blossoms and looked it all over—the flower that Anne had loved! Then he laid it tenderly back again. Not all the blooms of earth could, for any other reason, have won a glance from him at that moment; but I know that he has a **tuberose** engraven as sharply upon

his memory as you ever saw any white flower cut upon a tomb-stone.

"Presently Minnie left the room, glancing at me as she went. I ventured to lay my hand on John's shoulder. 'I know it, Arnold,' he said quietly. 'You would help me if you could. But there is no help on earth. Don't worry about me. I can't leave while she is above ground. There will be time enough, by and by, for rest.'

"'I have no word of consolation to offer,' I said.

"'But I have a thought that consoles me,' he replied, leaning forward with tender passion to lay his hand on hers; 'I have not altogether lost her. I shall meet her again, my darling! I shall meet her again!'

"I turned away and left them there hand in hand.

"When I went up the next morning I found John trembling with excitement. 'I have just restrained myself from taking Dr. Marks's life!' he said, his teeth fairly chattering. 'What do you think that the brute dared to propose to me? He wants to make a *post-mortem* examination of Anne! That young form that the hand of man has never touched, to be cut up for the gratification of a mere professional curiosity! I told him to run for his life, or I would strangle him.'

"Telling this, John panted like a man out of breath.

"I tried to soothe him. 'These doctors get used to everything,' I said. 'Marks could have no idea how you feel about it.'

"He wrung his hands, still shivering with loathing of the thought that had been forced on him. 'I can't get over it!' he said. 'I am sorry that he was called in at the consultation. If I had known in season, he should not have come. He is a coarse-grained fellow, who, for the

sake of gratifying his curiosity about a disease, would outrage all the decencies of life. 'I believe, Arnold—' here John choked with the words he would have uttered.

" 'My dear fellow, try to forget it,' I said. 'He has asked, and you have refused, and there's an end of the matter.'

" 'I don't believe that it is ended,' John said, looking at me strangely.

" 'You don't mean—' I began.

" But he lifted his hand as though he could not bear to have the thought put into words. 'I shall watch her grave every night for a week,' he said. 'Will you watch with me to-night, Arnold?'

"I promised, and we parted.

" Anne Atherton's case was a peculiar one. They had called it quick consumption, for want of a better name. She always persisted in saying that she had swallowed something sharp like a pin, and that it had entered her left lung; but of all her physicians, Doctor Marks was the only one who believed it possible that she might be right. On the strength of this half agreement he had proposed the examination.

"The South cemetery, just outside the city, used to be the paradise of body-snatchers. It was in a lonesome neighborhood, and two sides bordered on the open country. Many a grave in that cemetery had given up its dead to the dissecting-knife, while the bereaved ones at home little dreamed that its sacred rest had been disturbed. The Athertons had a lot there, and Anne was buried in it. We covered the new-made grave with evergreens, wreath linked in wreath, the whole sprinkled with white flowers—a pretty counterpane for the fair sleeper below.

"It was five minutes past nine in the evening when I vaulted over the stone wall, and walked down the

central avenue. The Atherton lot was not far from the entrance, and instead of a high fence, with gate and lock like the others, it was surrounded only by a low rim of granite. As I approached, I saw the tall, white monument in the centre, and John Sharon leaning against it, and looking down on the wreath-covered mound at his feet. He started when he heard my step, and came to meet me, taking my hand in a strong, cold clasp.

" 'We will sit here,' he said, leading me to a shady nook at the other side of the avenue.

"The place he had selected was a grove of Norway spruces which formed a half-circle, the open side facing the Atherton lot, and not more than two rods distant from it. Thoughtful for my comfort, though indifferent to his own, John had thrown a shawl over the horizontal slab of marble in the centre of this grave, and on that we seated ourselves. He had brought, too, a little flask of brandy, which he pressed into my hand, but would not taste of himself. It did not come amiss; for the season was the last of October, and the night chilly, though clear and calm.

"I asked John what he meant to do if the doctor should make his appearance.

" 'I shall frighten him,' he said. 'I have my pistol here, and mean to fire it. I couldn't bear to have a fight over her grave.'

"We sat there and awaited in silence, John with his eyes fixed on the mound across the way. The last ray of the setting moon touched with a white lustre its wreaths, and every little ghost of a flower, then slipped up the shaft of marble near by, pointed with a luminous finger to the 'rest in peace,' engraven there, showed name after name, and date after

date, stole up the cross at the top, lingered an instant on its summit, then melted into the air. Following its flight with my glance, I saw that the sky was of a pale, transparent gray, with a few large stars in it. Clearly out against this background stood the roofs and spires of that sleeping city that breathed while it slept, and more clearly yet the monuments, and a fine tracery of the bare trees, branch, stem, and twig showing delicate as lace-work, of that nearer city which slept in awful, breathless silence, never stirring for sunrise nor sunset, never starting at any alarm, nor opening its eyes, let who would go by.

"The evening had been calm, but as it grew toward midnight a faint and fitful breeze came now and then, like a sigh, setting that net-work of branches in a shiver, and sweeping the dry leaves about with a low and mournful rustling. The place and time, the silence that was only broken by that weird and spirit-like wind, and yet more, the face of my companion, affected me strongly. John sat leaning slightly forward, his hands clasped on his knees, his gaze fixed on that grave he had come to watch, and as motionless as any stone about us. The frozen look of his face chilled me. I could not see nor hear that he breathed; and there was no movement of an eyelid even. I would have spoken to him if I had dared. I longed for some sound which would startle him out of that trance; but there he sat motionless, apparently lifeless.

"I took a swallow of brandy and tried to occupy my thoughts otherwise. I looked through the interstices of the trees near me and counted grave-stones. Close by were two old sunken graves with slate stones leaning awry at their heads, where lay, or had lain, grandfather and grandmoth-

er Sawyer—a later John Anderson and his wife, who had gone, hand in hand, up and down the hill, and now slept together at the foot. I say they had lain there; for, in the fifty odd years since their burial, it was most probable that their dust had left its place beneath those tumble-down slate stones and gone about other business, rising, may be, in grasses and flowers. Not much of the old couple left in their coffins, be sure. Perhaps the children had carried the last of them away in violets and mayweed, that very summer. Possibly the birds had pecked them up, in one shape or another.

"Would John Sharon never move?

"I turned and peered back to where a small white cross stood, looking like a child in its night-gown, with arms extended. I could fancy some dear little frightened thing coming to me in that lonely place, silent from fear, or only faintly whimpering, all of a tremor, poor babe! till I should reach and clasp it safe. The rustling of the leaves was its little bare feet in them, the sigh of air was its sobbing breath.

"I gave myself a shake. Well, to be sure! a white marble cross to mark where a child had been buried a year or two before. I remembered having seen, in June, a red-ripe strawberry on that grave, looking as though the little creature's mouth were put up through the sod to be kissed.

"I turned to John Sharon again. He had not stirred. I looked at the grave he watched, and wondered if, with that steadfast gaze, he could pierce the sod, as clairvoyants tell, and see Anne lying, cold and lovely, far below, with one hand under her cheek and the other on her breast, and her hair flowing down unbound, never again to float on any breeze, to toss with any light motion of hers, to be twisted about his fingers.

"I turned quickly to touch him, but, as I raised my hand, he started. A sough of air had arisen, faint but far-reaching; the leaves rustled and crept all about the many graves; and through that sound I heard a step."

"John's form came erect, as though stiffened by a galvanic shock, and he sharply turned his head aside to listen. For one moment there was silence again, then a sound of feet carefully treading down the avenue toward us. I heard the breath shiver through John's teeth, and saw him take something from his breast. Then two men came stealing across our view, their forms, as we sat low, defined against the sky. One was unknown to me, but the other was easy to recognize — Dr. Marks's large, athletic form loomed against the stars. Both men carried spades, and the doctor had a sack hanging over his arm. They went directly to the Atherton lot, and, after whispering together for a moment, the smaller man stooped to pull away the wreaths from the grave, and Dr. Marks set his spade to the earth and his foot to the spade."

"'We must make haste,' I heard him say. 'Our time is short.'"

"His was shorter than he knew."

"Without looking directly at John, I had seen him come forward with his knee to the ground, and raise his hand level with his eyes, and I was aware of a flicker before his face, as of light on polished metal. There was a faint sound of the spade thrust through loose gravel, and, as he heard it, John started, and cried out as if the thrust had been through his heart. At the same instant a flame leaped

out from the gloom wherein we lurked, the silence cracked with a sharp report, and both men dropped their spades and ran."

"John started to his feet, hastened to the grave which he had saved from profanation, and, after having removed from it, with loving care, every sign of disturbance, threw himself upon it, and sobbed as though his heart would break."

The major paused, brushed his hand across his eyes, and gazed a moment longer into the coals, in which he had seemed to read that story. Then he looked up quickly, straightened himself, and became aware again of the southern night, the many tents, and the fire-lighted faces of soldiers listening toward him.

"I had my suspicions," he resumed, in a changed voice, "that John's shot was not so harmless as he had intended it to be; but I said nothing to him, and when he told me to go home, I went. When I reached the street, I saw two men walking slowly away, one supporting the other. The next day I heard that Dr. Marks was dead. Strangely enough, we were able to keep the knowledge from John. He never left the house, except at night, till after a week, when we joined our regiments; and since then he has had enough to think of and to do without inquiring after Dr. Marks's health."

"The doctor's family said he died of heart-disease; and I don't blame them for putting the best face they could on the affair. The hearts of most people, when they die, have something the matter with them—they are likely to stop."

## LITTLE LOVE.

*"Of such is the kingdom of heaven."*

**THE** first evening-bell of the N— State Prison had rung, and the deputy-warden stood in the guard-room taking the ward keys from their nail, and looking at his revolver. A guard watched from each of the windows toward the yard, and at one of the narrow loopholes beside the door stood a little figure on tiptoe peeping out, only half her face reaching above the wood-work.

This was Minnie Raynor, the warden's daughter—a child so happy and so beautiful that lips unused to fanciful talk called her fanciful names; a child so sweet, too, that tender looks and thoughts ever followed her. Rough men patted her nestling cheek, and calling her "darling"; to her father, she was "my angel"; but her mother went to the heart of the matter, and called her "Little Love."

The deputy went toward the door near which she stood. "O Minnie! is it you?" he asked; "or is it a ray of sunshine that has come in at the window?"

She laughed as she settled down from tiptoe, and turned her head; and the level sunshine steeped her

through—dimpled, delicate face, luminous brown eyes, flaxen hair, and all her baby whiteness.

"Mây I go out with you?" she asked, in a voice of childish sweetness.

"Certainly!" he answered. "Please open the door for me; my hands are full."

She tried, in perfect good faith, to do as he bade her; and the men watched, between amusement and admiration, those tiny rosy hands that pulled ineffectually at iron bar and nail-studded oaken door.

"I can't make it move," she said at length; and, looking about, perceived that they were laughing at her.

They went out on to the platform, and the door was closed behind them.

"Now, stand close to me while I ring the bell, and watch the men file in, then we will go down to the prison," the deputy said.

At the second bell, the convicts marched slowly out of the different shops, joined in the yard, and passed by, on their way to the prison, the stairs at the head of



which stood the deputy and Minnie Raynor.

The child looked in wonder at that long line of silent men who walked so close together, with interlocked steps, and never raised their faces. There was something in it that provoked her to mischief. Sorrow and sin she knew nothing of, and she had never seen in those about her a gravity which her smiles could not banish. Why should she not be a sunbeam to this cloud also?

There was a flit of white drapery at the deputy's side, and a toss of yellow-flaxen hair.

"Come back, and wait for me," he said hastily, his eyes fixed on the advancing line.

There was a trill of bird-toned laughter, and Minnie Raynor scampered down the stairs as fast as her feet could carry her.

The officer dared not go after her, nor remove his eyes from his charge, but he leaned a little, and tried to catch her. She laughed, and fled on, leaving her blue sash in his hand, and, reaching the outer door of the prison, stood looking at the convicts as they passed by her.

Hundreds of men were there, each stained by some dark crime, yet Minnie smiled into their faces and saw nothing to fear or dislike. And in every face, as she looked, dimly, as in troubled waters, there shone back on her a faint and far-away reflection of remembered childhood and innocence. Every hard face softened, and met her glance with brightening eyes, and every heart blessed her—the warden's bonnie little daughter.

Near the end of the line was a man whose overseers never turned their backs on him—of whom every officer in the prison was wary. This man, William Jeffries, had been ten years under sentence of death for wilful murder, and had passed that time in daily expectation of the order for his execution.

If personal beauty had aught to do with virtue, one might say that this sentence was an unjust one; for the convict was not only strikingly handsome, but had an air of superiority. The black hair was thrown carelessly back, and left fully exposed the marble-white, exquisite features, whose expression, when he looked down, was one of pride and melancholy. But when he raised those full black eyes, the beholder shrank involuntarily from their hard and brilliant regard. No smile ever was seen on those compressed, haughty lips; they never spoke save when obliged to, and never asked a favor. And it was well known that he watched, day and night, for any chance of escape, and cherished a deep, cold hate for his keepers.

As he approached her, Minnie smiled up into his face, then started forward, and, taking his hand, walked on with him, to the horror of the guards and the malicious amusement of the convicts. For the man himself, he merely submitted to the soft clasp of her fingers, and kept his eyes downcast; but his face turned a deep red, which had not faded when he reached his cell door.

There the overseer interfered, and drew Minnie away, just as she was entering the cell.

"I want to go into his play-house

and see the pretty pictures on the walls," she said.

"You must not!" was the reply. "It is wicked to go in there. It's no place for you."

Jeffries drew his cell-door to, and, as he stood holding it, gave the overseer a glance. That glance blazed.

"Don't stare at me!" the officer exclaimed:

The convict lowered his eyes.

Minnie walked on reluctantly to the end of the ward, and stood there while the cell doors were locked; then, when she saw the hands pushed through the gratings, she ran down the walk, full of frolic, and caught one of them.

"You can't get it away!" she cried, holding on to the white and well-formed hand with her tiny fingers.

Had any of his keepers been in front of Jeffries' cell then, they would scarcely have recognized him. The bold eyes were soft and humid, the pallid face faintly colored, and a smile of tender sweetness trembled about the mouth.

Minnie leaned close against the grating, and looked through at the pictures that lined the walls of the cell. Only the iron rods separated her head from that guilty breast. Some of her bright locks pushed through and touched the convict's sleeve, and her tender hands still caressed that hand that had been stained with a brother's blood.

"Are they your pictures?" she asked.

He reached, and, taking the prettiest one from the wall, gave it to her. Not even to her would he break the rule of silence.

"O Minnie! Minnie!" said the deputy chidingly, as he came down the walks, after making his rounds. "Why did you run away from me?"

She displayed her picture with

childish delight. "He gave it to me," she said, nodding toward the convict. "Isn't he good?"

"He is very kind," the officer replied. "Did you thank him?" "Well, we must go now. You can come again some other time."

"Good-bye!" Minnie called out to her new friend. "I shall come to see you again very soon. And I want to kiss you now," running back again.

The deputy, with the child's hand in his, hesitated, and looked embarrassed. He made a point of being scrupulously civil to the convicts, and was particularly careful not to offend this one; but he shrank from allowing such a leave-taking.

"It won't hurt her, sir," said the prisoner, in an eager voice. "She is too pure to take a stain."

The child's hand was released, the convict bent inside his cell, and took the kiss she gave him through the bars; then Minnie went into the house with her protector.

"I am not sure that I like it," Mr. Raynor said, after he had heard the story. He took the child in his arms. "I am not sure that I shall let my angel go down to that place again."

"But, father," his wife said gently, "if our angel can do good there, we ought not to refuse. I should not wish her to go unguarded, nor, indeed, very often in any way; but she might go down occasionally with one of us, or the deputy. As Jeffries says, she is too pure to take a stain."

The wife prevailed; and, thereafter, Minnie Raynor's sweet face often cheered the gloom of the prison. The convicts learned to bless her small shadow as it fell across the work or book carried close to the cell door for light. They would start and smile at any sign of her coming—

a laugh, a word, or the patter of light feet on the stones. Those who were on the side of the prison next the street thought themselves repaid if, after a day of toil and silence, they caught a glimpse of the child in a window, or in the garden of the warden's house. They fabricated wonderful toys for her in their leisure hours—balls that bounded marvelously, ornaments carved from soup-bones, and rattles that were a puzzle to take apart or put together. In return, she gave them smiles and thanks, and whatever dainty she could coax from her mother to carry in.

But to no one was this fair vision so dear as to him on whom she had first bestowed her preference; for on her he concentrated all the softness which the others showed toward any one who noticed them. She was the only one to whom he spoke, on whom he smiled; and for her sake he would humble himself to any extent. He who had before scorned to ask a favor, now begged for tools and materials to make toys for the warden's daughter. He showed jealousy when she noticed any one else—he begged her constantly for assurances of affection. On her he poured out all the suppressed tenderness of his heart; for she was the only being who had ever come to him with perfect trust—the only being who believed him good.

"I think you are real nice," she would say, gazing at him admiringly. "And you are pretty, too. I wish that you lived in our house, so that I could see you all the time."

Once, when she was missing from the prison several days, Jeffries could scarcely taste his food, and at length, unable longer to endure the suspense, he asked for her.

"Is anything the matter with the warden's daughter, sir?"

"Is that any of your business?" the overseer demanded roughly.

The warden, unseen by him, was at his elbow, and reproved his rudeness sharply.

"A civil question deserves a civil answer," he said; "and you are not lowered by speaking to one whom my daughter talks with. Minnie is well, Jeffries, and I will tell her that you inquired. She has been away on a visit."

The longing for freedom had never left this man's heart, and now a new motive for desiring it was added. Minnie had confided to him her desire to own a little gold watch with hands that went round and round; and, even while listening to her, he had resolved that, should he ever escape, he would buy and send to her the tiniest and prettiest gold watch that could be found. He dreamed over this plan, as other men dream over ambition or love. He fancied the brown eyes dilating at sight of a package addressed to herself, the dear little head advanced in eager curiosity as father and mother broke the package open, her cry of delight and wonder when she saw its contents, the dimpled hands that snatched at the gift, and the sweet voice uttering thanks to the far-away "Mr. William," as she had chosen to call him.

Always, now, this golden thread ran through the dark and tragical web of his retrospections and anticipations.

Thus more than six months passed away. The fall and winter were over, and spring had come again; and those mysterious impulses of new life which the reawakening of nature brings to the human heart made this man's confinement every day less tolerable to him. He said to himself that he should go mad if it were longer continued. The monotony

and restraint were hard enough ; but that constant dread of the sword of justice, for ever suspended over him, was a torture. Hanging would be better than such a life.

Early in the spring Jeffries had been moved from his cell on the inner side of the block to one next the street, and through the long window opposite his grating he could see the warden's house, its visitors coming and going, its pleasant, open windows, with curtains blowing in and out, and, better than all else, he could see little Minnie at her play in house or garden. He could see her dance into the breakfast-room at morning, and run to kiss her father, who would lift her to her place at the table. He knew that she drank milk from a silver mug, and that she sometimes took a lump of sugar from the sugar-bowl. He could see her mother lead her away to bed at evening, and knew that she always took a pet kitten with her, sometimes in her arms, sometimes chasing through the hall after her. He could see her by day soberly hushing a doll to sleep, bending absorbed over a picture-book, or romping in the garden. Once she stumbled and fell there, and the convict, watching her, sprang at his bars as though he would break them. He gazed an hour after she was carried into the house, and let his supper grow cold while he waited to assure himself that she was not much hurt. Being satisfied at length, he ate his cold mush and molasses, and drank his cold tea without milk, and lay down to dream of his idol.

There was good reason for his being peculiarly anxious about his little friend that night and indifferent about his supper, for he meant to be a free man the next day or to seal his fate at once. All his preparations were made. He had sewed another dark

half under the gray half of his suit, so that by ripping a few stitches he could pull off the gray leg of his pantaloons, the gray side of his cap and jacket, and appear in plain dark clothes, and he had procured a guard-key and a slender iron bar two feet long, to defend himself with if attacked.

Besides these preparations, he had been careful to make a good impression on the minds of his keepers. He had been so quiet and docile that for some time no search had been made, and no suspicions entertained of his designs. Moreover, he had for the first time since his condemnation begun to speak of trying to have his sentence commuted to imprisonment for life, of course with the appearance of hoping for ultimate pardon. No one would suspect him of risking his life in trying to escape while he had any chance of a commutation.

Jeffries had been for months at work on a doll-house, which he meant as a surprise to the warden's daughter, and also as a *souvenir*, and a help in his escape. From the carriage-shop he had begged fine wood, and, since no tool could be taken to the cells, he had been allowed to shape the parts of his cottage in the same shop. Every night, unknown to his keepers, he had bartered away his supper to the convict in the next cell, receiving in return glue to fasten his work together, a bit of glass to smooth the wood, and oil to polish it. It was really a beautiful toy-house, for the man had taste and ingenuity, and a heart to do his best. It was finished with windows, doors, and balconies, and the rooms inside were carpeted and curtained with silk and velvet, and had chairs and tables so finely carved out of bones the convicts saved from their dinners as to look like delicate ivory work. All his leisure time for months had been

given to perfecting this gift, and now it was completed, and there remained only to present it.

It was a bright evening in May, and the chaplain was going his rounds, changing the books, and speaking a kind word here and there. Minnie, who had recovered from her fall, was with him, and when they reached Jeffries' cell, she went no farther. She seldom got beyond that, and to-night it was impossible to do so; for the prisoner now showed her his present, and promised that the next day it should be given into her possession.

Minnie gazed in rapturous delight while he displayed its beauties to her. She could scarcely wait till morning to inspect it more closely, and she put her hands through the bars to touch it, and make sure that it was real.

The chaplain admired and praised, then went on. "I see that I must go alone, Minnie," he said. "I cannot expect you to leave such an attraction as that."

"Will you remember me for this, darling?" the prisoner asked, when the two were left to themselves.

"Oh! yes," she answered fervently. "I will love you always. My father says that you want to go home, and when the governor comes here again, I'm going to ask him to let you. The governor is a splendid man, and lets me coax him. But he pulls my hair. Though," she added, after a pause, "he pulls it real easy."

"Do you love the governor better than you do me?" the convict asked jealously, with a real pang at heart. What did that man, high in wealth, rank, and happiness, want of this little girl? Jeffries began to conceive a dislike for him, to think that even pardon would be unwelcome from him.

"I love you best," Minnie said

thoughtfully, "and"—looking up with serious eyes—"I'm saying prayers for you every night, and asking God to save you. Mamma said I might."

"To save me!" he repeated.

"Yes. What is save, Mr. William? Mamma said it is something good."

"I—I don't know," he replied, both puzzled and embarrassed. Religion was about the last subject he would have thought of; and when the chaplain mentioned it professionally, the brilliant, scornful eye of Jeffries had often checked the words upon his lips. But that his darling and idol should pray for him, was a very different thing.

Steps were heard returning. Jeffries hastily snatched the little hands still stretched through the bars, kissed them passionately, then turned away from the door.

"Come, little lady!" the chaplain called out.

"Good-bye, Mr. William!" Minnie said, with her face pressed close to the grating.

He echoed her good-bye hoarsely, without looking round.

"Good-bye!" she said again, lingering, and wishing to see his face. "I shall come soon again."

He made no reply, and she was obliged to go. But no sooner had she gone than he sprang to the door again, and listened hungrily for the sound of her retreating footsteps, cursing the chaplain's heavy boots and empty talk. It was her last visit to him there, he knew.

The warden had gone away from home for a day or two, and the deputy had entire charge. So completely had Jeffries' appearance imposed on him, he consented to allow him the privilege of presenting to Minnie Raynor her playhouse with his own hands.

"He is so fond of her, and has

taken such pains to make the baby-house, it seems a pity he should not have the pleasure of giving it to her," he said. "It is best to encourage a man who is trying to reform. Last year there wasn't a worse man in the prison, now there isn't a better one, and it is all that child's doing. Mrs. Raynor is willing, and there is no reason why I should object. I want Jeffries to see that I trust him."

One of the guard drew his face down to a preternatural length, and gave a low whistle. "The deputy's soft," he whispered to a companion.

The deputy heard the whistle, though not the whisper, and his spirit rose.

"Any one who knows better than I do, had better take my place," he said.

"I don't profess to know more than you do in other things, sir," the guard answered. "But I've been in this prison ten years, and I have learned something of the quirks and turns of convicts. I believe that fellow cares no more for Minnie Raynor than I do for the man in the moon. He is trying to curry favor with the warden, to get a commutation, or get eased up so that he may cut and run."

"We'll see who is right," the deputy said. "Meantime, I don't mean to give him a chance to cut and run."

About ten o'clock in the forenoon, Jeffries was called out of his shop, the toy-house was given him, and he was bidden go up-stairs to meet the little lady who had come out for her present.

A great color rushed to his pallid face at this summons, and a great breath swelled his breast. The hour has come! After ten years of servitude and confinement, the green fields and the wide world were before him, if he succeeded. If he failed,

speedy death would be his reward for the attempt. He well knew that if he were prevented from going out, or arrested when he had once got out the order for his execution would be issued immediately. He had been warned of that.

His heart beat hard and high as he stepped from the shop, but it sank in his bosom as he glanced across the yard. There stood Minnie at the head of the stairs, to be sure; but the deputy stood beside her in an attitude that showed plainly he was on his guard, and the door was locked behind them.

He had expected to be called into the guard-room, or, at least, that Minnie would have stood in the open door. Moreover, besides these precautions, his quick eye caught the gleam of a scarcely covered rifle-barrel at one of the windows.

But he went up firmly, without any appearance of disappointment, and presented his gift to the child, smiling on her involuntarily, even at that bitter moment.

Minnie took her present with delight, and, being unable to hold it, put it into the deputy's hand. Then, before either of them divined her intention, she flung her arms around the convict's neck, and gave him a loving kiss.

It was too much. In the despair of that moment, he cared little for the curious eyes that watched him. Claspings the child in his arms, he burst into tears.

There was a moment of silence. All were awed by such a display of emotion in such a man. In that moment Jeffries had controlled himself, put away the little hands that tenderly strove to wipe his tears, and turned to descend the steps.

The guard inside unlocked the door, and the deputy was leading his charge in. Jeffries was half-way

down the stairs when the click of the lock struck his ear, and stiffened his nerves like steel. One bound, and he was within the door, pushing with main strength against three men who struggled to close the lock before he could enter. The strength of desperation was his, and he overcame them, and entered the guard-room, caught Minnie Raynor in his arms, as a shield, while he hastily pulled out the bar of iron suspended from his waist, and fumbled for the guard-key which was to unlock the last door that stood between him and liberty.

It was all the work of a minute. The child clung to his breast, pale and trembling, and hid her face in affright from the muzzles of fire-arms that sought to find him unguarded, and, holding her as his defence, Jeffries reached the outward door.

An accident favored him, for it was the hour for changing guard on the walls, and the relieved guard, coming up outside, opened the door behind the fugitive. The surprise was too sudden. They could not stop him. Still holding the child for a shield, Jeffries sprang down the outer stairs, and found himself in the opened yard of the warden's house.

But the alarm-bell had been rung, and a command shouted across the posts, and as the fugitive fled across the green to the gate, he was confronted by one man, while two others followed close on his steps. There was no help for it. This man in his path must be disabled. He dropped the child from his arms, and raised the iron bar at the same moment that his opponent, having apparently more faith in the strength of the stock than the accuracy of his aim, lifted the butt-end of his rifle for a blow.

"You shall not strike him!" cried Minnie Raynor, and flung herself forward to shield her friend; and, at

the same instant, both blows fell. The guard aimed falsely, but the convict, striking with fierce precision, would have hit his adversary but for that loving interposition. Alas! the blow struck the fair temple of the prisoner's dearest and only friend.

Minnie Raynor dropped like a flower before the scythe of the mower.

All was confusion. The mother rushed shrieking from the house, men came from the street, the guard from the prison. There was a moment when he might have escaped, but Jeffries did not take advantage of it. Throwing himself down by the child, he called upon her in agony, kissed her pale lips, and chafed her chilling hands. "O my God! my God!" he muttered.

They surrounded and bound him.

"I won't try to run away, I swear I won't!" he cried wildly. "Don't mind me; see to her. Go for a doctor. Do something for her quickly. O God! O God! Open your eyes, my angel! I didn't mean to hurt you. I would rather stay here all my life, or be hanged to-day, than hurt you, my darling!"

They tore him away from her, and carried him back to prison. There they searched him, but found nothing but a lock of silken hair in his breast, done up in a paper.

"She gave it to me," he said piteously, but made no remonstrance when they did not return it to him.

"Only see how she is, and tell me," he begged. "You know I've got to hang now, and you know that I wouldn't have hurt a hair of her head for my life. I didn't mean to strike any one, except in self-defence. You can't blame me for trying to escape. It was only natural. But tell me how she is."

The deputy looked at him fixedly.

"The child never breathed after you struck her," he said.

The eyes of the convict remained wide open, and fixed on the speaker's face. And, still with that gaze full of horror, he sank at the officer's feet.

He lay in the punishment-cell that night without sleeping, apparently without sense. And he lay there all the next day in darkness, quiet and silent, never tasting food.

The second morning, the warrant for his execution was read to him.

"I am glad of it!" was all his comment.

They put him back into his cell, no change being made in his fate on account of the child's death. One had but to look into his face to see that his punishment was severe enough. One only request he made; that, after his death, the little lock of hair which Minnie had given him might be put into his breast, and buried with him. Then he set himself to prepare for death.

"She wanted me to be saved, and I will not disappoint her, if I can help it," he said.

The chaplain of the prison and the warden's family were Protestants; but Jeffries hated the chaplain, and he recollected having heard Minnie speak of a certain "splendid priest" in the town, who had once given her a picture of a lady with a baby in her arms, and a gold ring round her head. The child knew nothing of creeds, and had clung as trustingly, perhaps more trustingly, to the black-robed father, than to any of the clergymen who visited her father's house.

For this priest Jeffries sent.

"I know nothing of God, nor of religion, sir," he said. "But I have only a few days to live, and I want to repent, and make what atonement I can. I can say sincerely that I am sorry I have not lived a better life, and that I deserve all the pun-

ishment I have had. If God should refuse to forgive me, I will not blame him. But I think he will not. The God who made that little angel must be better than I can even conceive."

Looking through the window into the street, on that first day he was returned to his cell, Jeffries saw the house that he had made desolate. He saw the closed blinds, and the mournful faces of those who came and went. He saw flowers brought. Later, carriages came, and a crowd slowly gathered. Then he fell on his knees before the grated door, and prayed. One glimpse, only one glimpse of the casket that held her!

Presently there was a stir about the door, and four boys appeared, bearing out the lost treasure. The cemetery was near, and these boys were to bear the child to her resting-place there. Slowly and tenderly they carried their burden, and not far away those eyes, full of hopeless agony, strained to watch them.

The sill of the gate was a step higher than the garden walk, and as the foremost boys mounted this step, the casket tilted a little, and the eyes of the condemned man saw, through the glass lid, a white little face turned sidewise, with its cheek in the palm of a waxen hand, and sunny hair flowing around, the whole framed in flowers.

As the sweet, pathetic vision passed, the convict fell on his face, with loud and bitter weeping.

Three days after, Jeffries mounted the scaffold, humbled, penitent, and hopeful.

"I am glad it is God's will that I should die now," he said. "After what I have done, my life would be too terrible to me, and would not profit any one else. But I do not consider this hanging the punish-



ment for my crime. No; my reward for having killed willingly one I hated, was that I afterward destroyed unwillingly a life dearer to me than my own. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. **And I bless God for the little love**

on earth that made me believe in the Infinite Love in heaven."

They were his last words.

Perhaps the warden's dear little girl would never, in a long and beautiful life, have accomplished the good which was effected by her **early and pitiful death.**

**"OUT OF THE DEPTHS HAVE I CRIED UNTO THEE,  
O LORD!"**

**A CHRISTMAS SKETCH.**

"Our blood splashes upward, O our tyrants !  
And your purple shows your path,  
But the child's sob curseth deeper in the silence  
Than the strong man in his wrath."

"If wishes were horses, beggars might ride," says the proverb.

What a pity it is that wishes are not horses!—that at seasons when almost every tongue drops the words, "A merry Christmas!" "A happy New-Year!" the will should not rise and breathe the breath of life into those words; make them move, make them work; put bit and bridle on them, and direct them to go where they are most needed. Wishes might then be made into very excellent horses, and beggars might ride at least once a year; might be lifted for a day out of the mire of care and suffering that dulls the light of heaven to their eyes, and stops out the voices of heaven from their ears; lifted into a belief in the humanity of man and the mercy of God; might be given a little restful journey into that easy land where the rich dwell every day.

There is more truth than poetry in the line,

"Leave us leisure to be good."

One who has no time for thought

will almost certainly go astray; and men and women whose lives are spent in fighting the wolf from their doors, will fight him with whatever comes to hand, and will sometimes catch up strange weapons.

So it might chance that these living wishes may have wings also, and the beggar's soul may rise as well as his body.

I should like to set a regiment of such wishes galloping down Grind street this coming Christmas, and stopping at every door.

That was a sorrowful street a few years ago, and I don't know that it has grown merry since. A tall block of tenement-houses walled the northern side from end to end, leaving off so abruptly that, had they been written words instead of brick houses, there would have been a — after them. Indeed, if the reader has a fancy for a miserable pun, he might say that there *was* a dash after them, houses being scarce.

A very sensitive person, on looking at that block, would be likely to straighten himself up, draw his elbows close to his sides, and feel as though his nose was unnecessarily large. It is not impossible that he might "toe in" a little in walking.

unless he reached the next street. Not a curve was visible in the whole block, horizontal and perpendicular reigning supreme. The mean brick front came to the very edge of the sidewalk, and the windows and doors were as flat as though they had been slapped in the face when in a soft state. Every house was precisely like every other house, and the only way of finding any particular one was by counting doors.

"These houses toe the mark," the builder had said when he looked on his completed work, standing complacently with his hands in his pockets, and his head a little on one side.

"Toe the mark" was the right phrase. The two meagre steps that led to each front door suggested the thought, and the whole had an air of soul obedience.

The tenants in this block were of that pitiable class called "decent," which generally means poor; too independent to beg, straining every nerve to live respectably, and making an extra strain to hide the first one; people whose eyes get a little wild at the prospect of sickness, who shudder at the thought of a doctor's bill and workless days, who sometimes stop their toil for a moment, and wonder what may be the meaning of such words as "ease," "contentment," "pleasure." There were clerks and book-keepers whose families burst out through their incomes in every direction; starving artists of all sorts; and the rest, people who toiled down in the dark, at the foundations over which soared the marble palaces of the rich, darkening heaven.

These people had got in a way of dressing alike; they had the same kind of curtains, and the same plants stretching beseeching shoots toward the tantalizing line of sunshine that let itself down, slow and golden, to the middle of the second floor win-

dows, then drew back over the roofs of the houses opposite, while little flowers of all colors looked lovingly and reproachfully after it, cheated so day after day, but never quite losing faith that some day the bright-winged comforter would come quite down to their hearts.

Eyes of angels, to whom these roofs and walls were transparent, saw, doubtless, variety enough under the surface: aspirations that reached to the house-top and looked over; aspirations that soared even to the clouds and the stars, catching a heavenly likeness; aspirations that stopped not at the stars, but climbed so high that their flowers and fruitage hung in the unfailing sunlight of heaven beyond reach of earthly hands, but seen and touched by ineffable hopes ascending and descending. What dark desires crawling upon the earth and covering their own deeds those poor eyes looked upon, I say not; what hate, deep and bitter; what cankering envy and disappointment; what despair, that with two tears blotted the universe; what determination; what strongly rooted purpose; what careless philosophy eating its crust with a laugh. Let the angels see as they may, with human eyes we will look into one room, and find our story there.

This room is on the second floor, and consequently gets its windows half full of sunshine every pleasant afternoon. The furnishing of it shows that the occupants had seen better days; but those days are long past, as you can see by the shabbiness of everything. There are evidences of taste, too, in a hanging vase of ivy, a voluble canary, a few books and pictures; and everything is clean.

It was a bright gloaming in December of 186-, when a woman sat alone in this room. She was ev

dently an invalid, looking more like a porcelain image than a flesh-and-blood woman, so white and transparent was she, so frail the whole make of her. Soft light-brown hair faintly sprinkled with gray was dropped beside each thin cheek, dovelike eyes of an uncertain blue looked sadly out from beneath anxious brows, and the mouth, which once must have expressed resolution, now, in its comparison, showed only endurance. This was a woman who had taken up life full of hope and spirit, but whom life had turned upon with blow after blow, till finally both hope and spirit were broken. Her days of enterprise were over.

She sat there with her hands listlessly folded, her work fallen unnoticed to the floor, and her eyes flushed with weeping. She had been sitting so an hour, ever since a visitor had left her; but, hearing a step on the stair and a child's voice singing, she started up, wiped her eyes, and mended the fire, her back turned toward the door as it opened.

A little girl of eight years old came in and gave her school-books a toss upon the table, crying out, in a boisterous, healthy voice, "O mother! I am starved! Give me something to eat."

"Supper will soon be ready, Nell," the mother said gently, drawing out the table.

"I can't wait!" cried the child. "My stomach is so empty that it feels as if there was a mouse there gnawing. You know we had nothing but bread and butter for dinner, and I do think that's a mean dinner. Why don't you have roast beef? I know lots of girls who have it every day."

"We can't afford it," the mother said falteringly. "Beef is very high."

"Well, what have you got for sup-

per?" demanded the child. "You promised us something good."

"I have nothing but bread and butter, dear. I couldn't get anything else."

"Well, Mother Lane, I declare if that isn't too bad!" And the child flung herself angrily into a chair. "We don't have anything fit to eat, and I wish I could go and live with somebody that wouldn't starve me. I won't eat bread and butter, there 'now! I'm so sick of it that it chokes me."

The mother's face took a deeper shade, and her lip trembled, but she made no reply; and Nell sat angrily kicking her heels against the chair, and pouting her red lips.

Mrs. Lane knew well how vain is the attempt to teach a child gratitude for the necessities of life. Children are grateful only for that which is superfluous, taking the rest as a matter of course, and they are not to be blamed either. For gratitude is a fruit, and not a flower, and those budding natures know not yet what it means. After a little while, another and a louder step sounded on the stairs, this time accompanied by a whistle; and the door opened noisily to give admittance to a boy of ten years old, who also flung his books down, and opened his cry:

"Mother, give me some money, quick! The oysterman is just at the end of the street, and I can get oysters enough for our supper for thirty cents. Hurry up, mother, or he'll go away!" And the boy performed a double-shuffle to relieve his impatience.

"I can't spare the money," his mother said faintly.

"Well, what have you got for supper, then?" he asked fretfully.

The mother made no answer, and the boy turned to his sister for an explanation.

"Bread and butter!" said Nell, with an air of ferocious sarcasm.

"Well, if I ever!" pronounced her brother, standing still with his hands driven emphatically into the uttermost depths of his pockets, and looking at his mother with an air at once astonished and accusing. "If we live like this, I'll run away; see if I don't!"

She turned upon them with a look that was either desperate or angry.

"Children, wait till your sister comes home. Don't ask me for anything."

Frank gave the door a bang, pulled his cap still closer on to his head, since he ought to have pulled it off, and taking a seat by the window, sat kicking his chair in concert with his sister. The mother continued her preparations with the air of a culprit watched by her judges.

Unheard in this duet of heels, a softer step ascended the stairs, and a young lady opened the door and entered, a smile on her pretty face, her breath quickened and her color heightened by the run up-stairs, and waves of yellow hair drawn back from her white forehead. She tossed her hat aside, and sank into a chair.

"There, mother, I do feel tired and hungry," she said; then, catching a glimpse of her mother's face, started up, exclaiming, "What is the matter?"

"Mr. Sanborn has been here," Mrs. Lane answered unsteadily, without looking up.

The daughter's countenance showed her anticipation of evil news.

"And what of that?" she asked.

"He has raised the rent," was the faint answer.

"How much?"

"Eight dollars a month?"

"Impossible!" cried the daughter, flushing with excitement. "We pay now all that the three rooms are

worth. He knows what my salary is, and that I cannot give any more."

"He says he can get that for the rooms," her mother said.

"Then we will go elsewhere!"

"We cannot!" whispered the mother despairingly, for the first time raising her woeful eyes. "Every place is full. They are going to tear down houses to widen two or three streets, and Mr. Sanborn says that people will have to go out of town to live."

"What are we to do!" exclaimed the girl, pacing excitedly to and fro. "We only just managed to get along before. Did you tell him, mother?"

"I told him everything, Anne; and he said that he was very sorry, but that his family was an expensive one, and it cost him a good deal to live; and, in short, that he must have the eight dollars more."

"He is a villain!" cried Anne Lane. "And I will tell him so. I should think his family *was* an expensive one. Look at their velvets, and laces, and silks! Look at their pictures and their curtains! One of my scholars told me to-day that Minnie Sanborn said they were going to have a Christmas-tree that will cost five hundred dollars. Think of that! And this is the way they pay for it!"

"Don't say anything to him, Anne," pleaded her mother, in a frightened tone. "Remember, he is one of the committee, and can take your school away from you."

The young teacher's countenance fell. It was true; her employment did, in some measure, depend on the good-will of this man.

She choked with the thought, then broke out again.

"The hypocrite! I have seen him at prayer-meetings, and heard him make long prayers and pious speeches."

The mother sighed, and remained silent. She had been wont to check her daughter's somewhat free animadversions, and to make an effort, at least, to defend them of whom Anne said, "Their life laughs through and spits at their creed;" but now the bitter truth came too near.

There was a moment of silence, the children sitting still and awed, the mother waiting despondently, while the fatherless girl, who was the sole dependence of the household, did some rapid brain-work.

"You think he really means it, mother?" she asked, without pausing in her walk.

"Yes, there is no hope. I almost went on my knees to him."

There the widow's self-control broke down suddenly, and, putting her hands over her face, she burst into a passion of tears.

It is a terrible thing to see one's mother cry in that way; to see her, who soothed our childish sorrows, who seemed to us the fountain of all comfort, herself sorrowing, while we have no comfort to give.

Anne Lane's face grew pale with pain, and it seemed for a moment that she, too, would lose courage. But she was a brave girl, and love strengthened her.

"There, there, mother!" she said. "Don't cry! I guess we can make out some way. Couldn't we do with two rooms? I could sleep with you and Nell, and Frank could have a pillow out here on the sofa."

"I thought of that," the mother sobbed drearily. "But he said that the rooms go together."

The girl's breath came like that of some wild creature at bay.

"Then we must draw in our expenses somewhere. We must give up our seats in church, and I will do the washing."

"I meant to do the washing,

dear," her mother said eagerly. "And perhaps I might get some work out of the shops. You know I have a good deal of time to spare."

Even as she spoke, a sharp cough broke through her words, and her face flushed painfully.

"No, mother, no!" the daughter said, resolutely holding back her tears. "You are not able to work. Just leave that to me. Washing makes round arms, and I find my elbows getting a little sharp. I can save money and bring the dimples back at the same time."

There was a knock at the door, and their laundress came in, a sober, sensible-looking Irishwoman.

"Good-evening, ma'am! Good-evening, miss! No, I won't sit down. I must go home and take my young ones off the street, and give 'em a bit of supper. I just stepped in to see if you want your washing done to-morrow."

Mrs. Lane looked appealingly to her daughter to answer.

"We are sorry, Mrs. Connors," Anne said, "but we shall have to do our own washing, this winter."

"O Lord!" cried the woman, leaning against the wall.

"There is no help for it," the girl continued, almost sharply, feeling that their own distresses were enough for them to bear. "Our rent has been raised, and we must save all we can."

"Oh! what'll I do, at all?" exclaimed the woman, lifting both hands.

"Why, the best you can; just as we do," was the impatient reply.

Mrs. Connors looked at them at tentively, and for the first time perceived signs of trouble in their faces.

"The Lord pity us!" she said. "I don't blame you. But my rent is raised, too. I've got to pay five dollars a month for the rooms I have,

and I don't know where I'll get it. It's little I thought to come to this when Patrick was alive—the Lord have mercy on him! The last thing he said to me when he went away to California was, 'Margaret, keep up courage, and don't let the children on the street; and I'll send you money enough to live on; and I'll soon come back and buy us a little farm.' And all I ever heard of him, since the day he left me, is the news of his death. Now I'll have to take the children and go to the poor-house. All I could do last winter only kept their mouths full, let alone rent. I couldn't put a stitch on them nor me; and you wouldn't believe how cold I am with no stockings to my feet, and little enough under my rag of a dress. I couldn't buy coal nor wood. The children picked up sticks in the street, and after my work was over I had to go down to the dump, and pick coal till my back was broke."

"Who is your landlord?" Mrs. Lane asked.

"Mr. Mahan—Andrew Mahan, that lives in a big house in the square. And he asks five dollars for two rooms in that shanty, that's squeezea into a bit of a place where nothing else would go. Besides, the house is so old that the rats have ate it half up, and what's left I could carry off on my back in a day. When Mr. Mahan came to-day, his dog crawled through the door before it was opened. I said to him, says I, 'Sir, when the wind and the rain take possession of a house, it belongs to God, and no man has a right to ask rent for it.' You see, I was mad. And so was he, by that same token."

"But he is an Irishman, and a member of your own church," said Anne.

"And why not?" demanded the woman. "Do you think that Yankees are the only ones that grind the

poor? Yes, Mr. Mahan is rich, and he lives in style, and sends his daughters to a convent school in Montreal. And often I've seen him in church, dressed in his broad-cloths, and beating his breast, with his face the length of my arm, and calling himself a sinner; and troth, I thought to myself, 'that's true for ye!'"

Anne Lane went into her school-room the next morning with a burning heart, and it did not soothe her feelings to see Mr. Sanborn, her landlord, appear at the door, a few minutes after, smilingly escorting a clerical-looking stranger, who had come to visit the school.

Mr. Sanborn, though not an educated man, chose to consider himself a patron of education; made himself exceedingly consequential in school affairs, and had now brought a distinguished visitor to see his pet school, the "Excelsior." Anne Lane had one of the show-classes, and he began the exhibition with her.

"Commence, and go on with your exercises just as if there were no one here," he said, with a patronizing smile, after they had taken their seats. "This gentleman wishes to see the ordinary daily working of our system."

The first exercise was a reading from the Bible, and a prayer by the teacher, and Anne's fingers were unsteady as she turned over the leaves for a chapter. Her eyes sparkled as she caught sight of one, and her pulses tingled as she read, her fine, deliberate enunciation and strong emphasis arresting fully the attention of her hearers:

"Times are not hid from the Almighty: but they that know him, know not his days.

"Some have removed landmarks, have taken away flocks by force, and fed them.

**"They have violently robbed the fatherless, and stripped the poor common people.**

**"They have taken their rest at noon among the stores of them, who after having trodden the wine-presses suffer thirst.**

**"Out of the cities they have made men to groan ; and God will not suffer it to pass unrevenged.**

**"Cursed be his portion upon the earth : let him not walk by the way of the vineyards.**

**"Let him pass from snow-water to excessive heat, and his sin even to hell.**

**"Let mercy forget him : may worms be his sweetness ; let him be remembered no more, but be broken in pieces like an unfruitful tree."**

Closing the book then, Anne Lane dropped her face into her shaking hands, and repeated, almost inaudibly, the Lord's prayer.

Mr. Sanborn was not dull, but he was incredulous. It was almost impossible that this little school-mistress would dare to mean *him*. Yet that new sternness in the young face, ordinarily so smiling, the passion in her voice, with the remembrance of his last interview with Mrs. Lane, altogether made up a pretty strong case against her.

"She makes a strange selection from the Scriptures to read to children," whispered the stranger to him, as Anne hurriedly went through with the first recitations.

"Very strange, sir! very strange!" answered the other, stammering with anger. "And what is worse, it is intended as an insult to me. I have found it necessary to raise the rent of my houses. She is a tenant of mine, and this is her revenge. I hope, sir, that if you have anything to say on the subject, you will not hesitate to speak freely."

The Rev. Mr. Markham sat and

considered the case, laying down certain points in his mind. Firstly, women should be sweet, humble, and modest. Secondly, sweetness, modesty, and humility, with firmness and patience, should especially characterize a teacher of youth. Thirdly, persons in authority, clergymen, school-committee men, etc., should be treated with scrupulous respect by all their subordinates.

The reverend gentleman put on his spectacles, the better to see this young woman who had so boldly vetoed his fundamental doctrines. She held herself very erect, no modest droop whatever ; there was a little flicker of heat-lightning in her eyes, and a steady, dark-red spot on each cheek ; moreover, she had red hair. Verdict for the plaintiff. She must have a reprimand, a warning, and, on repetition of the offence, must be informed that she is no longer considered a suitable person to mould the minds of youth.

Poor little Anne Lane ! This great, stupid, conceited man did not dream that her aching heart was laden with sweetness as a hive with honey, and that what he called a sweet woman was a sugar-coated woman. He did not allow that there might be some exceptions to his third rule. The reprimand was delivered pitilessly, the warning made sufficiently plain ; then the two gentlemen withdrew, leaving the teacher pale and stunned. The visitor had taken the coldest possible leave, and Mr. Sanborn had not noticed her at all.

"Oh ! why did I yield to anger ?" she thought, in terror and distress. "What right have the poor to feelings, to thoughts ? How dare they denounce wrong, even when they die by it ? What was I thinking of ?"

A thrill of pain ran through her every nerve at this last question.



She had been thinking all the time of her mother's sobbing words, "I almost went on my knees to him!"

The month crept on toward Christmas. Unknown to her daughter, Mrs. Lane had spent day after day going about the shops and vainly soliciting work. She had not sufficient clothing to protect her from the weather; she was weakened by sorrow and anxiety, and the disease, which had long been threatening and reaching out for her, made a final grasp. With a terror, all the more terrible in that she could not speak of it, she felt her lungs give way and her breath grow shorter. What would her young children do without her? If she should be long ill, how were the doctor's bills to be paid? How were the funeral expenses to be met? What crushing burden, beside the sorrow, was she going to lay upon the already burdened shoulders of her poor little girl? She only prayed that the blow might fall swiftly. Poor people can't afford to die leisurely.

One day, about a week before Christmas, Anne came home and found her mother lying senseless upon the floor. Mrs. Lane had held up as long as she could, and now her powers of endurance were gone. But she had her prayer, for the blow fell swiftly. On Christmas morning all her troubles passed away.

Christmas evening came, and all was still in the house. The neighbors had kindly done what they could, and two of them sat with the lifeless form of what had once been the mother of these children. Frank and Nell had cried themselves to sleep, and Anne was left with the night upon her hands. She could not sleep, and she could not pray. The faith that comforts in sorrow she knew not. She had wept till her

head reeled, and the air of the house stifled her.

"I must get out and take the air, or I shall go crazy," she thought. And, dressing hastily, she went out into the bright and frosty night. She wandered aimlessly about the streets, scarcely knowing where she went; not caring, indeed, so long as she walked and felt the wind in her face.

"Christ on earth?" she thought. "I don't believe it! It's all a fable."

On her way she met Mrs. Conners, weeping bitterly. She was going to the watch-house after her little girl. Biddy had stolen a turkey from a shop-window, and a policeman had caught her.

"It is the first thing the child ever stole," the poor woman said; "and what made her do it was hunger. We haven't had a taste of meat in the house this month, and poor Biddy heard the other girls tell what they had for dinner, and it made her mad."

Anne listened as one in a dream, and went on without a word. Presently she came into a sharp glare of light that fell across the sidewalk from a brilliantly illuminated window. She paused to look in, not because she cared what it was, but because she longed for distraction. There was a long suite of parlors, showily if not tastefully furnished, and filled with a gay company, many of them children. In the farthest end of the rooms stood a magnificent Christmas-tree, decked with colored candles, flowers, and fruits, and hanging full of presents. The company were all assembled about the tree, and, as she looked, a smiling gentleman stepped up, with the air of a host, and began to distribute the Christmas gifts.

Anne Lane's heart stood still when she recognized Mr. Sanborn.

"O you murderer!" she moaned, as she sank exhausted on the

icy steps. "Your candles and your flowers are red with my mother's blood!"

When the Christmas angels looked down upon the earth that night to see how fared the millions, to whom in the morning they had sung their song of joy, their eyes beheld alike the rich man in his parlor and the

stricken girl who lay outside his door.

Did they record of him that he had "kept the feast," and worthily remembered one who came that day "to fill the hungry with good things"?

Or did they write against him the fearful judgment which had once already sounded in his ears,

"Let mercy forget him:  
Let him be remembered no more"?

## THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT.

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### IN TWO PARTS.

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#### PART I.

It stood in one of the wildest spots in New England, surrounded by woods, a "frame house" in a region of log-houses, and, as such, in spite of defects, a touch beyond the most complete edifice that could be shaped of logs.

The defects were not few. The walls were slightly out of the perpendicular, there were strips of board instead of clapboards and shingles, the immense stone chimney in the centre gave the house the appearance of being an afterthought, and the two windows that looked down toward the road squinted.

Yes, a most absurd little house, with all sorts of blunders in the making of it, but, for all that, a house with a worth of its own. For Jack Maynard had put the frame together with his own unassisted hands, had raised it with but two men to help him, and had finished it off alone. And round about the work, and through and over it, while his hands built visibly, his fancy also built airy habitations, fair

and plumb, and changed all the landscape. Before this fairy wand, the forest sank, broad roads unwound, there was a sprinkle of white houses through the green country, like a sprinkle of snow in June; and in place of this rustic nest rose a fair mansion-house, with a comely matron standing in the door, and rosy children playing about.

At this climax of his castle-building Jack Maynard caught breath, and, coming back to the present, found himself halfway up a ladder, with a hammer suspended in his hand, the wild forest swarming with game all about him, and the matron of his vision still Miss Bessie Ware, spinster.

Jack laughed. "So much the better!" he exclaimed, and brought his hammer down with such force, laughing as he struck, that the nail under it bent up double and broke in two, the head half falling to the ground, the point half flattened lengthwise into the board, making a fragment of rustic buhl-work.

"There's a nail driven into the future," said the builder, and selected nother, and struck with better aim this time, so that the little spike went straight through the board, and pierced an oaken timber, and held the two firmly together, and thus did its work in the present.

"Well done!" said Jack; "you have gone through fifty summers in less than a minute."

The startled woods rang to every blow, the fox and the deer fled at that tocsin of civilization, and the snake *slid* away, and set the green grass *crawling* with its hidden windings. Only one living creature, besides the builder, seemed happy and unafraid, and that was a brown-and-white spaniel that dozed in the shadow of the rising walls, stirring only when his master whistled or spoke to him.

"Wake up, Bruno, and tell me how this suits your eyes," Jack would call out. Whereat Bruno would lift his lids lazily, show a narrow line of his bright brown eyes, give his tail a slow, laborious wag, and subside to his dreams again, and Jack would go on with his work. It seemed to be his heart, rather than the hammer, that drove the nails in; and every timber, board, latch, and hinge caught a momentary life from his hands, and learned his story from some telegraphing pulse. The very stones of the chimney knew that John Maynard and Bessie Ware were to be married as soon as the house should be ready for them.

There was not a dwelling in sight; but half a mile further down the road toward the nearest town, there was an odd, double log-house, wherein lived Dennis Moran and his Norah, three little girls, and Bessie Ware, Dennis Moran's sister's child.

Jack paused in his work, took off his straw hat to wipe away the

perspiration from his face and *toss* his hair back, first hanging on a round of the ladder just above him the hammer that had driven a nail through fifty summers. As he put his hat on again, he glanced downward, and there, at the foot of the ladder, stood twenty summers, looking up at him out of a face as fair as summers ever formed. The apple-blossoms had given it their pink and white, the June heavens were not bluer than those eyes, so oddly full of laughter and languor. The deepest nook under a low-growing spruce, nor shadow in line-draped cave, nor hollow in a thunder cloud, held richer darkness than that hidden in the loose curls and waves of hair that fell about Bessie Ware's shoulders. No part of the charm of her presence was due to her dress, save an air of fresh neatness. A large apron, gathered up by the corners, was full of fragrant arbor-vireæ boughs, gathered to make a broom of. The large parasol, tilted back that she might look upward, allowed a sunbeam to fall on her forehead.

"Oh! what a tall pink has grown up since I came here" exclaimed the builder, as he saw her.

"And what a great bear has climbed on to my ladder," retorted the girl.

He came down from the ladder and began to tell her his plans.

"Bessie, I mean this shall be yet one of the best farms in the state. On that hill I will have corn and clover; there shall be an orchard in the hollow next to it, with peach-trees on the south side of the little rise; and I will plant cranberries in the swamp beyond. In ten years from now, if a man should leave here to-day, he wouldn't know the place."

Bessie smiled at the magician who was to work such wonders—never

doubting but he would—then glanced about at the scene of his exploits. Sombre, blue-green pines brooded over the hill that was one day to be pink with clover, or rustling with corn; oaks, elms, maples, birches, and a great tangle of undergrowth, with rocks and moss, cumbered the ground where peaches were to ripen their dusky cheeks, when Jack should bid them grow, and large, green, and red-streaked and yellow apples were to drop through the still, bright, autumn air; and she knew that the future cranberry-swamp now stood thick and dark with beautiful arbovitæ trees, whose high-piled, flaky boughs, tapering to a point far up in the sunshine, kept cool and dim the little pools of water below, and the black mould in which their strong roots stretched out and interwove. But Jack could do anything when he set out, and her faith in him was so great that she could shut her eyes now and see the open swamp matted over with cranberry-vines, and hear the corn-stalks clash their green swords in the fretting breeze, and the muffled bump of the ripe apple as it fell on the grass.

After a while, Bessie started to go, but came back again.

"I forgot," she said, and gave her lover a book that had been hidden under the boughs in her apron. "A book-peddler stopped at our house last night, and he left this. Uncle Dennis doesn't want it, and I do not. Perhaps you can make some sense out of it."

It was a second-hand copy of Comstock's *Natural Philosophy*, for schools, and was scribbled through and through by the student who had used it, years before.

Jack took the book.

"And that reminds me of your white-faced boarder," he said, with a slight laugh. "Is he up yet?"

"Oh! he gets up earlier than any of us," she answered lightly. "He doesn't act cityfied at all. And you know, Jack, the reason why he is white is because he has been sick. Good-bye! Aunt Norah will want her broom before she gets it."

Bessie struck into the woods instead of going down to the road, and was soon lost to view. Standing beside her little house, she had looked a tall, fairly-formed lassie; but with the great trunks of primeval forest-trees standing about her, and lifting their green pyramids and cones far into the air, she appeared slim and small enough for a fairy. Even the birds, chipping about full of business, seemed to flout her, as if she were of small consequence—not worth flying from.

She laughed at them, and whispered what she did not dare to say aloud: "Other people besides you can build nests!" then looked quickly around to see if any listener were in sight.

There was a slight, rustling sound, and an eavesdropping squirrel scampered up a tree and peered down with twinkling eyes from a safe height. She was just throwing one of the green twigs in her apron at him, when she heard her name spoken, and turned quickly to meet a pleasant-faced young man, who approached from an opposite direction. This was the white-faced boarder who had left the city to find health in this wild place.

The two walked on together, Bessie as shy as any creature of the woods, and her companion both pleased and amused at her shyness, and trying to draw her out. To his questioning, she told her little story. Her mother was Dennis Moran's youngest sister, her father had been a color-sergeant in the English army. There had been other children, all

younger than she, but all had died, some in one country, some in another. For Sergeant Ware's family had followed the army, and seen many lands.

"I am an East Indian," Bessie said naively. "I was born at Calcutta. The others were born in Malta, in England, and in Ireland. It didn't agree with them travelling about from hot to cold. My father died at Gibraltar, and my mother died while she was bringing me to Uncle Dennis Moran's. May God be merciful to them all!"

Mr. James Keene had heard this pious ejaculation many a time before from the lips of humble Catholics, and had found nothing in it to admire. But now, the thought struck him that this constant prayer for mercy on the dead, whenever their names were mentioned, was a beautiful superstition. Of course he thought it a superstition, for he was a New England Protestant of the most liberal sort—that is, he protested against being obliged to believe anything.

They reached the house, near which Dennis Moran and his wife stood watching complacently a brood of new chickens taking their first airing. The young gentleman joined them, and listened with interest to the farm talk of his host.

What had set Dennis Moran, one of the most rigid of Catholics, in a solitude where he saw none of his own country nor faith, and where no priest ever came, he professed himself unable to explain.

"I'm like a fly caught in a spider's web, sir," he said. "When Norah and I came over, and I didn't just know what to do, except that I wanted to have a farm of my own some day, I hired out to do haying for John Smith's wife—John had died the very week he began to cut his

grass, and Norah she helped Mrs. Smith make butter. Then they wanted me to get in the crops, and after that I had a chance to go into the woods logging. When I came out of the woods, Mrs. Smith wanted me to plough and plant for her. And one thing led to another, and there was always something to keep me. Norah had a young one, and Bessie came—a young witch, ten years old," said Dennis, pulling his niece's hair, as she stood beside him. "So I had to take a house. And the long and short of the matter is that I've been here going on ten years, when I didn't mean to stay ten weeks. But I shall pull up stakes pretty soon, sir," says Dennis, straightening up. "I don't mean to stay where I have to go twenty miles to attend to my Easter duties, and where my children are growing up little better than Protestants (he called it Prodestant). I'm pretty sure to move next fall, sir."

At this announcement, Mrs. Norah tossed up her head and uttered an unspellable, guttural "Oh!" brought from the old land, and preserved unadulterated among the nasal-speaking Yankees. "We hear ducks!"

Whatever might be the meaning and derivation of this remark, the drift of it was evidently depreciatory, and it had the effect of putting an end to her husband's eloquence. Doubtless, Mrs. Moran had heard such announcements made before.

Bessie stole a little hand under her uncle's arm, and smiled into his face, and told him that she had given Jack the book, and soon made him forget his mortification. She knew that he was sometimes boastful, and that the great things he was constantly prophesying of himself never came to pass; but she knew also that he had a kind heart, and it hurt her to see him hurt.

## *The House that Jack Built.*

That same book, which the girl mentioned merely to divert attention, was to be a matter of more consequence to her than she dreamed. It was more important than the wedding-dress and the wedding-cake, which occupied so much of her thoughts—more important than the jealous interference of Jack's mother, who did not like Bessie's foreign blood and religion, though she did like Bessie—more important than even her Uncle Dennis' actual flitting, when fall came—all which we pass by. Only one thing in her life then was of more consequence than that old school-book, which the pedler left because no one would buy it, and that was the earnest and sorrowing advice of good old Father Connors when, against his will, he united her to a Protestant.

John Maynard said later, that before he read that book he was like a beet before it is pulled out of the ground, when it doesn't know but it is a turnip, and firmly believes that it is growing upward instead of downward, and that those waving leaves of its own, which it feels, but sees not, exist in some outer void where nothing is, and that angle-worms are the largest of locomotive creatures.

It is doubtful if the artistic faculty is any more a special gift in the fine than in the useful arts, or if he who creates ideal forms, in order to breathe into them the breath of such life as is in him, is more enthusiastic in his work, or more fascinated by it, than he who, taking captive the powers of nature, binds them to do his will.

This enthusiastic recognition of the work, to which nature had appointed him, John Maynard felt from the moment when he first knew that a crowbar is a lever. He read that book that Bessie gave him with interest, then with avidity, and, having read, all the power latent in that

wide brow of his waked up, and demanded knowledge. He got other and more complete works on mechanics and studied them in his leisure hours, he made experiments, he examined every piece of mechanism that came in his way.

Coming home one Sunday from a meeting which she had walked six miles to attend, Mrs. Maynard, senior, was horrified to find that her son had paid her a visit during her absence for the sole purpose of picking in pieces her precious Connecticut clock. There lay its speechless fragments spread out on the table, while the yawning frame leaned against the wall. Bessie sat near, looking rather frightened, and Jack, in his shirt-sleeves, sat before the table, an open book at his elbow. He was studying the page intently, his earnest, sunburnt face showing an utter unconsciousness of guilt.

"Land sakes, Jack!" screamed his mother. "You've been and ruined my clock!"

A clock was of value in that region, where half the inhabitants told the hour by sun-marks, by the stars, or by instinct.

He put his hand out to keep her back, but did not look up. "Don't worry, mother," he said, "and don't touch anything. I'll put the machine together in a few minutes."

Mrs. Maynard sank into a chair, and gazed distressfully at the ruins. That the pendulum, now lying prone and dismembered, would ever tick again, that those two little hands would ever again tell the time of day, that the weights would run down and have to be wound up every Saturday night, or that she should ever again on any June day hear the faithful little gong strike four o'clock in the morning—her signal for jumping out of bed with the unvarying ejaculation: "Land sakes!

it's four o'clock '—seemed to her impossible.

"And to think that you should do such work on the Sabbath-day!" she groaned out, casting an accusing glance on her daughter-in-law. "You seem to have lost all the religion you ever had since you got married."

Bessie's blue eyes lighted up: "I think it just as pious for Jack to study, and find out how useful things are made, as to wear out a pair of shoes going to hear Parson Bates talk through his nose, or sit at home and spoil his eyes reading over and over about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

"Come, come!" interposed Jack; "if you two women quarrel, and bother me, I shall spoil the clock."

This procured silence.

Had he been a little more thoughtful and tender, he would have told his mother that Bessie had tried to dissuade him from touching the clock, and had urged the impropriety of his doing such work on Sunday; but he did not think. She shielded him, and he allowed her to, scarcely aware that she had, indeed.

The young man's prediction was fulfilled. Before sunset, the clock was ticking soberly on the mantel-piece, the minute-hand hitching round its circle, and showing the reluctant hour-hand the way, and Jack was marching homeward through the woods, with his rifle on one arm and his wife on the other.

They were both so silent—that dark-browed man and bright-faced woman—that they might almost be taken as kindred of the long shadows and sunstreaks over which they walked. He was building up a visionary entanglement of pulleys in the air, through which power should run with ever-increasing force, and studying how he should dispense with an idle-wheel that belonged in that

maze; and she was thinking of him. He was thinking that this forest, that once had bounded his hopes and aspirations, now pressed on his very breathing, and hemmed his steps in, and wishing that he had wings, like that bird flitting before him; and she was watching his eyes till she, too, saw the bird.

Jack stopped, raised his rifle, took a hasty aim, and fired. Bessie ran to pick up the robin:

"How could you, Jack!" she exclaimed reproachfully, as she felt the fluttering heart stop in her hand.

He looked at it without the slightest compunction. "I wanted to see, as it stood on that twig, which way the centre of gravity would fall," he said. "Don't fret, Bessie! There are birds enough in the world."

The young wife looked earnestly into her husband's face, as they walked on together. "Jack," she said, "you might kill me, and then say that there are women enough in the world."

He laughed, but looked at her kindly, as he made answer: "What would all the women in the world be to me, Bessie, if my woman were out of it?"

Could she ask more?

"Jack, where do you suppose the song has gone to?" she asked, presently.

"Bessie, where does a candle go when it goes out?" was the counter-question.

There had been a season in this man's life, during the brief bud and blossom of his love for Bessie Ware, when his mind had been as full of fancies as a spring maple of blossoms. But he was not by nature fanciful, and, that brief season past, he settled down to facts. Questions which could not be answered he cared not to ask nor ponder on and all speculations,



save those which built toward an assured though unseen result, he scouted. The sole impression the bird had made on him was that it was a nice little flying-machine, which he would like to improve on some day. Meantime, he had much to learn.

The extent of his ignorance did not discourage John Maynard, perhaps because it opened out gradually before him, over a new, unknown path starting from the known one. He was strong, fresh, and healthy, and the very novelty of his work, and his coming to it so late, was an assistance to him. "I have a head for all I want to get into it," he said to his wife. "When my brain gets hold of an idea, it doesn't let go."

It seemed so, indeed; and sometimes when he sat studying, or thinking, utterly unconscious of all about him, his eyes fixed, yet glimmering, his mouth close shut, his breathing half lost, his whole frame, while the brain worked, so still that his hands and feet grew cold, Bessie became almost afraid of him, and was ready to fancy that some strange and perhaps malign spirit had entered into and taken possession of her husband's soul.

And thus it happened that, after two years, the house that Jack built was abandoned to one of his relatives, and the young couple, with their baby boy, left the forest for the city.

Of course, no one is to suppose that John Maynard failed.

It was summer again, and lavish rains had kept to July the fresh luxuriance of June. The frame house stood nearly as it was when its builder finished it. The walls had changed their bright yellow tint for gray, and a few stones had fallen from the top of the chimney—that was all. The forest still gathered close about,

and only a few patches of cultivated land had displaced the stumps and stones. A hop-vine draped the porch at the back of the house, and a group of tall sunflowers grew near one of the open curtainless windows.

Civilization had passed by on the other side, and, though not really so remote, was still invisible. Twice a day, with a low rumble, as of distant thunder, a train of cars passed by through the valley beyond the woods.

There was no sound of childish voices, no glimpse of a child anywhere about. The air bore no more intelligent burden than the low colloquial dropping of a brook over its pebbly bed, the buzzing of bees about a hive, and a rustling of leaves in the faint stir of air that was more a respiration than a breath. The only sign of human life to be seen without was a frail thread of blue smoke that rose from the chimney, and disappeared in the sky.

Inside, on the white floor of the kitchen, the shadows of the sunflowers lay as if painted there, only now and then stirring slightly, as the air breathed on the wide, golden-rayed shields outside. In the chimney-corner, almost as silent as a shadow, an old woman sat in a rocking-chair, knitting, and thinking. The two small windows, with crossing light, made one corner of the room bright; but where this woman sat, her face could be seen plainly only by fire-light.

It was a rudely-featured face—one seldom sees finely moulded features in the backwoods—but it showed fortitude, good sense, and that unconscious integrity which is so far nobler than the conscious. The gray hair was drawn tightly back, and fastened high on the head with a yellow horn comb; the tall, spare figure was clad in a gown of dark-blue calico covered with little white dots, and

a checked blue-and-white apron tied on with white tape strings, and the hands that held the knitting were bony, large-jointed, and large-veined.

The stick of wood that had been smouldering on the andirons bent in the middle, where a little flickering flame had been gnawing industriously for some time. The flame brightened, and made a dive into this break, where it found a splinter. The stick bent yet more, then suddenly snapped in two, one end dropping into the coals, the other end standing upright in the corner.

"Bless me!" muttered the old woman, dropping her work with a start. "There's a stranger! I wonder who it is."

She sat gazing dreamily at the brand a moment, and, as her face half settled again, it became evident that the expression was one of profound melancholy as well as thoughtfulness. The lifted eyelids, and the start that roused without brightening, showed that.

After a moment's reverie, she drew a long sigh, and, before resuming her work, took the long iron tongs that leaned in the corner, and most inhospitably tossed the figurative stranger into the coals.

"I wonder why my thoughts run so on Jack and Bessie to-day," she soliloquized, fixing the end of the knitting-needle into the leather sheath at her side. "I wish I knew how they are. It's my opinion they'd have done as well to stay here. I don't think much of that machinery business."

The coming event which had thus cast its shadow before, was already at the gate, or, more literally, at the bars. Bessie Maynard had walked alone up the road she had not trodden for years, and now stood leaning there, and looking about with eyes that were at once eager and shrink-

ing. Her face was pale, her mouth tightly closed; she had grown taller, and her appearance disclosed in some indefinable way a capacity for sternness which would scarcely have been suspected, or even credited, in the girl of twenty we left her. A glance would show that she had suffered deeply.

Presently, as she gazed, tears began to dim her eyes. She brushed them away, let down the slim cedar pole that barred her passage, stepped through, replaced the bar, and walked up the path to the house.

The knitter in the chimney-corner heard the sound of advancing steps, and sat still, with her face turned over her shoulder, to watch the door. The steps reached the threshold and paused there, and for a moment the two women gazed at each other—the one silent from astonishment, the other struggling to repress some emotion that rose again to the surface.

The visitor was the first to recover her self-possession. She came in smiling, and held out her hands.

"Haven't you a word of welcome for me, Aunt Nancy?" she asked.

Her voice broke the spell, and the old woman started up with a true country welcome, hearty, and rather rough. It was many a year since Bessie Maynard's hands had felt such a grasp, or her arms such a shake.

"But where is Jack?" asked his aunt, looking toward the door over Bessie's shoulder.

"Oh! he's at home," was the reply, rather negligently given. "But how are you, Aunt Nancy? Have you room for me to stay awhile? I took a fancy to be quiet a little while this summer. The city is so hot and noisy."

The old lady repeated her welcomes, mingled with many apologies for the kind of accommodations she

had to offer, all the while helping to remove her visitor's bonnet and shawl, drawing up the rocking-chair for her, and pressing her into it.

"Do sit down and rest," she said. "But where is the baby? Why on earth didn't you bring her?"

Bessie clasped her hands tightly in her lap, and looked steadily at the questioner before answering. "The baby is at home!" she said then, in a low voice.

Aunt Nancy was just turning away for some hospitable purpose, but the look and tone arrested her.

"You don't mean—" she began, but went no further.

"Yes," replied Bessie quietly; "there is only James left."

James was the eldest child.

Mrs. Nancy Maynard was not much given to expressions of tenderness—New England people of the old sort seldom were—but she laid her hand softly on her niece's shoulder, and said unsteadily:

"You poor dear, how tried you have been!"

"We have all our trials," responded the other, with a sort of coldness.

The old woman knew not what to say. She turned away, mending the fire. If Bessie had wept, she would have known how to comfort her; but this strange calmness was embarrassing. Scarcely less embarrassing was the light, indifferent talk that followed, the questions concerning crops, and weather, and little household affairs, evidently put to set aside more serious topics.

This baby was the fourth child that Bessie Maynard had lost. After the first, no child of hers had lived to reach its third year. Each one had been carried away by a sudden distemper. The first death had been announced to John Maynard's aunt in a long letter from Bessie, full of a healthy sorrow, every line stained

with tears. John had written the next time, his wife being too much worn out with watching and grief to write. At the third death, there came a line from Bessie: "My little boy is gone, Aunt Nancy. What do you suppose God means?"

Aunt Nancy had wondered somewhat over this strange missive, but had decided that, whatever God meant, Bessie meant resignation.

But now, as she marked her niece's changed face and manner, and recollected that laconic note, she was forced to give up the comforting thought. There might be endurance, but there was no resignation in that face.

The sense of distance and strangeness grew on her, though Bessie began to help her get supper ready, drawing out and laying the table as though she had done it every day of her life, and even remembering the cup that had been hers, and the little iron rack on which she used to set the teapot. "Jack found the brass-headed nail this hangs on miles back in the woods," she said. "It's a wonder how it got there."

"Why didn't Jack come with you?" asked Aunt Nancy, catching at the opportunity to say something personal.

A deep blush ran up Bessie's face at being so caught, but her hesitation was only momentary.

"He is too busy," she answered briefly.

"But I should think he might take a rest now and then," persisted her aunt.

Bessie gave a short laugh that was not without bitterness.

"What rest can a man take when he has a steam-engine spouting carbonic acid in one side of his brain, a flying-machine in the other side, and a wheel in perpetual motion between them? John is given over to

metals and motions. I might as well have a locomotive for a husband. Shall I take up the apple-sauce in this bowl?"

"Yes. I should think that James might have come." Aunt Nancy held desperately to the thread she had caught.

"James is a little John," replied Bessie, pouring the hot, green apple-sauce into a straight, white bowl

with a band of narrow blue stripes around the middle of it. "Never mind my coming alone, Aunt Nancy. I got along very well, and they will do very well without me."

They sat down to the table, and Bessie made a great pretence of eating, but ate nothing. Then they went out and looked at the garden, talking all the while about nothing, and soon, to the relief of both, it was bed-time.

## PART II.

It was late before Aunt Nancy felt the approach of sleep that night. She turned restlessly from side to side, thinking over Bessie's strange behavior, and trying to find a solution for it. The appearance of a mystery disturbed all calculations based upon her plain and outspoken experience.

But the habits of years are not easily broken, and sleep, that for more than six decades had been wont to settle over this woman's head as regularly as darkness settled on the earth, began now to dim her senses. She was about losing consciousness, when the vague sense of pain and perplexity which still clung to her mind strengthened and took a new form. It was no longer a woman who laughed bitterly when she should have wept, but a woman sobbing violently, she knew not why.

The sound continued, and before its dreary persistence Aunt Nancy's hovering sleep took flight. She started up and listened, not yet quite recalled to recollection. It was indeed a woman's voice sobbing uncontrollably. For one moment, the listener's blood chilled with a superstitious fear; the next, she recollected that she was not alone in the house. It was Bessie who mourned. "*Rachel weeping for her children, because they were not*," the old woman thought pityingly.

Poor Bessie had forgotten how thin the walls were in her old home,

and, when the door opened and a tall figure clad in white entered her room, she uttered a cry of affright.

"You poor child! I couldn't stand it to hear you cry so," Aunt Nancy said, going to her bedside and bending down to put a caressing arm around her. "Don't cry! Try to remember that you have not lost everything."

"I'm sorry I disturbed you, Aunt Nancy," Bessie said faintly, sinking back on the pillow. "You had better leave me to have it out alone. I don't often get a chance to have a good cry, and you have no idea what a relief it is."

"I know all about it!" Aunt Nancy replied, and her voice, low and deep, had a sound like a tolling bell. "I have seen 'em all go and leave me, one after another, father and mother, brothers and sisters, husband and children, till every earthly hope was covered over with dust, and it seemed as though there was dust on the very bread I ate. Yes, I know what it is better than you, for you have your husband and one child left yet, and I have nothing on earth!"

"I have not!" Bessie cried out passionately, with the jealousy of one whose grief is underestimated. "John and the boy are further away from me than my dead children are!"

The barrier was down. She had betrayed herself, and must tell the whole, though she might be sorry

afterward for having spoken. Concealment and self-control were no longer possible.

It was a tale too often true, though not so often told. The husband engrossed in business, and missing no home care which the love and duty of his wife could bestow, had forgotten, or did not care, or did not believe, that any return was due from him save a pecuniary support, or that he could be guilty of any sin of omission toward his wife, save the omission to provide her with food and shelter.

Perhaps no woman ever saw the heart she had once possessed slipping away from her, without making a mistake in her efforts to retain it. Indifference is her surest means of success, but indifference the loving heart can never affect. As well might flame hope to hide itself, living, in ashes.

The reserve and gravity of wounded feeling, when at length the husband noticed them, he named sulkiness, and the meanness of the causes to which he ascribed that were felt as an insult. The few timid reproaches and petitions the wife had brought herself to utter he listened to with surprise and annoyance, or with ridicule. Why, what in the world did she want?—to begin their courting days over again? In order to do that, they must first be divorced. What had he done? Had he beaten, or scolded, or starved her? Had he gone gallivanting about with other women? Nonsense! He had his business to attend to. Of course he loved her, but she mustn't bother him.

What reply is possible to such arguments? How small seem all our sweetest human needs when they are put into words, simply because words can never express them! In such a controversy hard natures

have always the advantage over sensitive ones, and seem to triumph by their very inferiority.

Bessie was silent, and her husband thought that she was convinced, and dismissed the subject from his mind. If he observed that she grew pale, he supposed that city air did not agree with her. He missed no home comfort, heard no complaint, and therefore took for granted that all was right. He frequently absented himself from home on business, never asking his wife to accompany him, women being in the way on such occasions, and she seemed satisfied to see nothing beyond her own fireside. He brought home his plans and studies at evening, and, when the children's play and caresses disturbed him, their mother took them away and amused them elsewhere. When, later, her little ones asleep, as she sat by her husband silently working, he found that the snip of her scissors and the rattle of her spools fretted him, Bessie said not a word, but went off to bed, and wet her pillow with bitter and unavailing tears, finding no comfort.

The thought of seeking comfort and help in her religion had not once entered her mind. She was dead to its obligations. They had never been impressed on her, and her heart had been engrossed by other interests. Her children had been baptized, and she usually went to an early Mass on Sunday, but never heard a sermon, and never read a religious book. She prayed often, but it was the outcry of pain, the petition for an earthly good, not the prayer for resignation and wisdom.

Of his wife's real life John Maynard knew no more than he did of life at the antipodes. His profession engrossed his heart. His happiness was to work and study over polished

metals, to fit cylinder, crank, and valve with nicety into their places; and at last, when that exquisite but irresistible power of steam, so delicate in its fineness, yet so terrible in its strength, began to steal into his work, to see the creature of brass and iron grow alive, and become more mighty than an army of giants, how tenderly could he handle, how carefully arrange, how patiently study out, the parts of his work! For the problem of that infinitely more exquisite mechanism—his wife's heart—he had no time.

The boy, as boys will, followed in the footsteps of his father. He emulated the slighting of which the father was himself unconscious, and treated his mother with that intolerable mixture of patronizing kindness and impatient superiority so often witnessed in the presumptuous children of our time.

When Bessie Maynard had poured out her complaint, with many an illustration of which a woman could well understand the bitterness, Aunt Nancy was silent a moment.

"It's pretty hard, dear," she said then, embarrassed what to say. "Some men have that way of not caring anything about their wives, as soon as they have got them; but I never thought John would act so. And you know, Bessie, that, if it is hard, still he is your husband, and you can't leave him for that. Try to be patient, and don't lose courage. I'm sure he loves you, though he doesn't show it; and he'll come round by-and-by."

The reply almost broke in on this trite advice: "I did not mean to leave him. I came down here to think. I can't think there. I wanted to see again this place where I was a child, and where I was so happy. I thought that perhaps some of the old feelings might come

back. I have been afraid of some things. Aunt Nancy, I was afraid I should grow to hate John!"

"Oh! no, Bessie," the old woman exclaimed. "Never let yourself hate your own husband! It would be a dreadful sin; and, besides, it wouldn't mend matters. It is better for a woman to love one who cares nothing for her than not to love anybody. I don't believe but John is fond of you still, if he'd only stop to think of it."

There was no reply.

"What else were you afraid of?" Aunt Nancy asked presently. "You said you were afraid of some things?"

Bessie did not answer.

That other fear that, shunned at first, then glanced upon, then brooded over silently till it had grown almost a probability, flashed out again on her in all its original hatefulness when she found herself about to explain it to a listener like this.

"If you don't want to tell, I won't ask you," Aunt Nancy said, with almost childlike timidity. "But, maybe, since you have begun, you would feel better not to keep anything back. You know, Bessie, I am on your side, though I am John's own aunt."

The younger woman crept nearer into the arm that half held her, and said, in a hurried whisper, "Every one is not so indifferent to me as John is!"

"I'm glad of it, child," was the calm reply. "I don't like to praise people to their faces, but you always had a sweet, winning way. I am glad that other people are good to you." She waited again for the explanation, not dreaming that it had been given.

Bessie Maynard drew a breath, like one who plunges into water. "There's some one who thinks me worth watching and sympathizing with, if John doesn't," she said.

"You don't mean a man!" exclaimed Aunt Nancy.

"Of course I do," answered Bessie almost pettishly.

The words were scarcely out of her mouth, before she was flung back on to the pillow by the arms that had held her so tenderly, and Aunt Nancy stood erect by the bedside. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Bessie Maynard?" she cried out indignantly.

"No, I am not!" was the dogged answer. "I have nothing to be ashamed of."

The flash of the old woman's eyes could be seen in the dim light. "What! you, a married woman, not ashamed to let a man who is not your husband talk love to you!"

"He never spoke a word of love to me," said Bessie, still sulky.

Aunt Nancy was utterly puzzled. "How do you know, then?" she asked.

Neither by nature nor education was this woman fitted to understand that subtle manner by which impressions and assurances are conveyed without a word having been spoken. A man would have been obliged to use plain language indeed, if he would have had her, a wife, understand that he loved her.

While Bessie described some of the delicate kindnesses of this dangerous friend of hers, Aunt Nancy listened attentively, and presently resumed her seat by the bed. She really could not see that the child had done, or meant, or wished any real harm.

"But, still, you must look out for the fellow, dear," she said. "He wouldn't hang round you so if he was what he ought to be. You never know what these city gentlemen are."

"He isn't a bad man!" Bessie exclaimed. "I won't have him called

so. I'm afraid, but, for all that, I respect him. I wish John were half as good."

The story was ended; but with the feeling of relief which followed the disburdening of her heart came also the uneasiness and half regret we always experience when we have been led unawares to confide a secret to one whom we have not deliberately chosen as a confidant. Conscious of this new uneasiness, Bessie wished to close the conversation.

"Don't let me keep you any longer," she said. "Go to bed now, and forget all the nonsense I have been talking. I am sorry I disturbed you."

Aunt Nancy paid no attention to this request. She sat a few moments in deep thought, then spoke abruptly:

"Bessie, did you ever go to any of your priests about this business?"

"To a priest!" repeated Bessie, astonished at such a question from a rigid Puritan like her aunt, and doubtful in what spirit it was asked. "What made you think of that?"

"I am not a Catholic," the old woman said, "but you are. And I like to see people live up to their religion, whatever it is. A religion that won't help you in a strait like this isn't worth having."

Bessie was silent, knowing not what to say. Her faith was sleeping. That religion would help as really as the trials of earth can hurt she had not thought. Like many others, she invoked the aid of the church on the great events, the births, the marriages, and the deaths, but let the rest of life fight its own battles.

"Now, you listen to me," Aunt Nancy said earnestly. "I'm not very wise, but I'm going to give you the best advice that you can get anywhere. Just you write to old Father Conners, the priest that married you and John, and tell him what

a trouble you are in. I've seen him, and I believe he's a good Christian, if he is a priest, and a sensible man, too. He comes three or four times a year up to a Mr. Blake's, over on the railroad, and says Mass in his house. There are a good many Catholics round there now. It's about time for him to come again. You write to him, and you won't be sorry for it. There's nothing else for you to do. Will you write, Bessie? I want you to promise."

The promise was given hesitatingly, doubtfully, more to get rid of the subject than from any conviction of its wisdom.

But a promise is a promise, and next morning Bessie wrote the letter, not because she wished to, but because she must; and a very dry, cold letter it was. She was a little helped to the writing of it by the pleasant prospect of carrying it to mail. That would give her a long, solitary walk and a whole afternoon quite to herself; for the post-office was in a desk, in a corner of the sitting-room of a farm-house four miles distant. This house was at the end of postal and stage accommodations in that direction. Three times a week a double-seated open wagon was driven there from a seaport town thirty miles to the southward, passing through several small villages on its way. This stage had brought Bessie up, and was to return the next morning.

She set out on her walk soon after their early dinner, and reached the post-office just at the high tide of that country afternoon leisure, when, their noon dinner quite cleared away, the women of the house are ordinarily free from everything that they would call labor. At this time the housewife smooths her hair and ties on a clean apron. One hears the snap of knitting-needles through the si-

lence, or the drowsy hum of the spinning-wheel, or the sound of the loom where the deep-blue woollen web grows, thread by thread, while the weaver tosses her shuttle to and fro.

Bessie had dreaded the gossip which she must expect to encounter; but, as she approached, the sight of blue and pink sun-bonnets out in the field, where the women were raking hay, relieved her fear. Not a soul was in the house. The watch-dog, recollecting her, gave no alarm, only walked gravely by her side, and looked on while she slipped her letter into the bag left to receive the mail. All the doors and windows stood open, and the sunshine lay bright and clear on the white bare floors. Large, stupid flies bumped their heads against the panes of glass, and a bumble-bee flew in at the front door, wandered noisily about the rooms, and out again by the back door. The painted wooden chairs stood straightly against the yellow-washed walls, and a large rocking-chair, with a chintz cushion, occupied one corner. A braided cloth mat covered the hearth, and the fireplace was filled with cedar boughs, through which glittered the brass andirons. On the high mantel-piece stood a pair of brass candlesticks, and a tumbler filled with wild roses.

Bessie glanced hurriedly about, then stole out, trembling lest she should be discovered and pounced upon by some loud-voiced man or woman from whom escape would be impossible. But no one appeared, and in a few minutes she was out of sight of the house.

Loud would be their exclamations of wonder and regret when they should discover that letter, knowing who must have brought it. How curiously would they handle it over,



and examine it, and try to peep into it while they speculated and guessed concerning its contents!

"One comfort," said Bessie to herself, as she glanced over her shoulder, and saw the last sun-bonnet disappear, "I sealed it so that not even a particle of air could get in; and they can't see a word without committing felony."

The June day was passing away in a soft glory. All the world was green, all the sky was blue, and all the air was golden. But the green was so various, from a verdant blackness, through many tints, to a vivid green that was almost yellow, it seemed many-colored as it was many-shaped. There was every shape and size, from the graceful plume of ferns to the square-topped oak with its sturdy, horizontal branches. Through it all wound the narrow brown road, with a line of grass in the middle between the wagon-wheels where the horses feet spared it. The birds were singing their evening song, and a brook at the roadside lisped faintly here and there, then lay still and shone, then suddenly laughed outright.

On such an evening one does long to be happy; and, if happy, then one feels that it is not enough. Bessie walked on slowly, taking long breaths of the clear, perfumed air that had now an evening coolness. She would fain have stayed out till night fell. The house was near, so she stepped aside, sat down on a mossy rock, and looked at the sunset. The last, thin, shining cloud there melted in the fervid light, grew faint, and disappeared. Bessie's eyes, so tearful that all this universe of green and gold swam before them, were fixed on the sky, and she thought over, with a clearer mind now, the last feverish, miserable years of her life.

It seemed to her that, if she had

been less exclusively devoted to her husband, and had interested herself in other people and in the events of the day, she would have been wiser and happier. She had made herself as a slave, and had received a slave's portion. It would be better to stand on a more equal footing, and, since works of supererogation, instead of winning his gratitude and affection, only fostered his selfishness and lowered her, to confine herself to the duties she was bound to perform.

"But it is my nature to love something with my whole strength, so that all else seems small in comparison," she said, sighing. "How can I help it?"

While she gazed fixedly at the sky, at first without seeing, she presently became aware of a red-gold crescent moon that had grown visible under her eyes, curved like a bow when the arrow is just singing from the string like the new moon whereon Our Lady stands, a tower of ivory.

The tears in Bessie's eyes made the shining curve tremble in the sky as though a hand held it; and, as though it were a bent bow, an arrowy thought flew from it, and struck quivering into her heart:

"Love God, and all will be well!"

She sat a minute longer, then rose and went quietly homeward. Aunt Nancy would be anxious about her; and the desire for solitude was gone. She was glad now that she had written to Father Connors, though the letter might have shown a gentler spirit. It was a comfort to have done something that was right, though it was not much.

One does not ordinarily become pious in a moment. We may recognize the voice of God, and be startled at the clearness and suddenness of the summons, but our sluggish faith has ever an excuse for a little more folding of the hands to sleep.

But though not obedient at once, Bessie Maynard felt, rather than saw, that there was a refuge which made it no longer possible for her to despair.

Within a few days she received an answer to her letter. The priest was coming to that neighborhood by the last of the week, and would see her. The letter was brief and to the point, and contained not one word of sympathy or exhortation; but the tremulous characters, that told of age or infirmity touched the heart of the reader. This old man gave her no soft words, but he was hastening to her relief. For the first time, she anxiously asked herself if it had not been possible for her to avoid all her trouble, and if there was any element in her story which could reasonably be expected to call forth anything but reproof for herself from a man whose whole life had been one of charity and self-denial. She wished to see him indeed, but she awaited his coming with a feeling little short of terror.

Bessie had not written to her husband. She could not bring herself to do that, for she did not wish to write coldly to him, and she would not use expressions of affection which had no echo in her heart. But she wrote to her son a gentle and tender letter, of which he was neither old nor sensitive enough to feel the pathos. Only one reproach found a place there: "I thought you might like to hear from me, though you cared more for your play than you did to say good-by to me when I came here, and left me to go to the depot alone." She did not intimate, though she thought, that the business which had called her husband away at the same time might easily have been postponed.

Father Connors came. His open buggy was driven to the door one

morning, and the boy who sat with him held the horse while the priest slowly alighted. He was a large, powerful-looking man, still vigorous, though slightly bent and stiff with age. Snow-white hair framed his expressive face, in which sternness and benevolence were strangely mingled. His color was fresh, perfect teeth gave a brilliancy to his infrequent smile, and his pale-blue eyes were almost too penetrating to be met with ease. He walked with his head slightly bent down and his gaze fixed upon the ground till he reached the door, then looked up to see Bessie standing on the threshold.

She was a pretty creature still, in spite of troubled years, and her manner and expression would have propitiated a sterner judge. Blushes overspread her face, and she trembled; yet an impulse of joyful welcome broke through and brightened her, as a sunbeam brightens the cloud.

The priest stopped short, with no ceremony of greeting, and regarded her a moment, while she waited for him to speak.

The scrutiny satisfied him apparently.

"You did well to come back here," he said then, and made a motion to enter. She stood aside for him to pass, and followed him into the little parlor which she had spent all the morning in preparing for him. An arm-chair had been improvised out of a barrel, some pillows, and a shawl, the rude fireplace was filled with green, and there were dishes of flowers about.

Her visitor did not appear to notice these simple efforts to do him honor. Almost before seating himself, he began to speak of what had brought him there.

"Now, my child, though I have time enough to say and hear all that

is necessary, though it should take a week. I have no time to waste. Tell me the meaning of your letter?"

No time for gradual approach, for timid intimations, or delicate reserves till, warming with the subject, she could show plainly all that was in her heart. She must make the "epic plunge" without delay. Stimulated by the necessity, Bessie called up her wits and her courage, and, without being aware of it, told everything in a few words.

When she paused and expected him to question her, to her surprise he seemed already to know the whole. And, to her still greater pleasure, those points on which she had touched lightly, fearing that they might seem trivial in his eyes, he spoke of with sympathy.

"It is those little attentions and kindnesses which sweeten human life, my child, and help to sustain us under its heavier trials," he said.

Bessie lifted her grateful, tearful eyes, and thanked him with a sad smile.

"And now," he continued, "I want you to go to confession."

Her eyes dilated with astonishment. She was confused and distressed, and a painful blush rose to her face.

"I have not confessed for years," she stammered. "I am not prepared. When I have time to think, I will go to confession in a church. It seems strange to confess here."

The priest was by nature and habit peremptory, and he knew that this was the proper time to exercise that quality. "Any place is proper for confession, if a better one is not to be had," he said. "As to being prepared, let us see. You tell me that you have been thinking this all over this week, to see wherein you may have done wrong. There, then, is an examen of your conscience as to

your duties toward your husband and, indirectly, toward God. You say that you have not practised your religion, but mean to do so in future. There is attrition, at least, and a purpose of amendment. You say that you know all you have committed of serious wrong in these years, don't you?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"You know humanly, as far as you can know, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit?" the priest corrected.

"Yes," said Bessie again. "But I want to think it over, and make sure of my sorrow and good resolutions."

"In short, you wish to reform and convert yourself, then go to God," said Father Connors. "That is not the way. It is God who is to convert you. You need not stay to try to conquer your feelings, and hesitate for fear you may not be able to. Your reason is convinced. It is enough. Go to God, and ask him to help you to do the rest. While you are thinking the subject over in the woods here, you may die, or the devil may come and tempt you in the shape of this friend of yours. I will give you half an hour. While I have gone out to read my office under the trees, you kneel down here, and first ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you, and reveal all your sins. Then say, and mean, that you are sorry, and plan how you may do better with God's help in the future."

He had risen while speaking, and was going toward the door. Refusal was impossible. Bessie carried her shawl-covered arm-chair out, and set it under a thick old pine-tree on the slippery brown pine-needles through which tiny ants were running in every direction, very busy about some buildings of their own, carrying sticks larger than themselves.

Father Connors seated himself, set his hat on the ground by his side, spread a red silk handkerchief over his head, and took out his Breviary. He had but little time to attend to the beauties of nature, but the situation brought an expression of pleasure to his face. He gave one glance up into the overshadowing branches that spread their fragrant screen between him and the sun, then a kindlier glance to the young woman who stood looking wistfully at him.

"Come here for your confession when you are ready, child," he said, "and don't be afraid. See how peaceful the skies are. Is God less gentle? And here! take my watch, and come back in twenty-five minutes. You have lost five minutes already."

Bessie took the large silver watch on its black ribbon, and hastened to shut herself in her room, and Father Connors became absorbed in his office. So much absorbed was he, he did not observe that the silk handkerchief slipped slowly from his head, and that a large spider let itself down by a thread from the tree above, stopped within a few inches of that silvery hair, which it contemplated curiously, then ran up its silken ladder again as a young woman came out of the house, walked with faltering steps across the sward, and sank on her knees by the priest's side.

An hour later, Father Connors climbed laboriously into his car-

riage, and drove away, and Bessie leaned on the bars, and watched him as long as he was in sight. She felt strong and peaceful. She counted over the promises she had made him, and resolved anew that they should be kept.

She stood there so long that Aunt Nancy, after having kept her dinner waiting out of all reason, came down to speak to her. She came with anxiety and hesitation, not knowing whether her niece was better or worse for this visit.

"You gave me good advice, Aunt Nancy," Bessie said, turning at the sound of her step.

The old lady was delighted. "So you're all right?" she said.

"I have got into the right track, at least," Bessie answered, as they walked up toward the house. "I have been to confession."

Aunt Nancy's face clouded again on hearing this avowal. That was all the priest's visit had amounted to, then—that John's wife had been induced to go to confession! How could people be so superstitious, so subjected, to their priests? She had hoped that Bessie might have received some good sound advice and instruction.

This she thought, but said nothing.

How was she to know that in that one word confession was included advice, instruction, good resolution, and sorrow for sin, as well as the mystical rite which she abhorred?

Late in the afternoon, Bessie went down and leaned on the bars again, looking up and down the road, looking at the tracks left by Father Conners' carriage-wheels—the smooth curve of their turning; looking to see the shadows creep across the road as the sun went down. The sadness of a lonely evening was upon her, and, though she had not lost her morning resolution, she had lost the joyous hopefulness with which those resolutions were made.

At her left, and quite near, a fringe of young cedars made a screen between the ground that belonged to her house and the farmer next to it, where her uncle Dennis had lived when John Maynard had wooed and won her.

Pain came with that recollection, and almost the old bitterness. "I must go home again, and put my resolutions in practice right away, or I shall lose them," she said to herself. "It won't do for me to stay here and brood over my troubles. I cannot bear loneliness; and how terribly lonely it is here! I wish I had some one to speak to beside poor Aunt Nancy."

She started, hearing a soft, clear whistling not far away. The strain was familiar, not to this region, but to her city life. While she listened, the sound ceased, or rather broke off suddenly.

Bessie's eyes were wide open, her face flushed. Was there more than one person who could whistle so marvellously clearly and sweetly?

Some one began to sing then more sweetly still, and coming nearer while he sang words written by the most melodious of poets:

"Hark! a lover, binding sheaves,  
To his maiden sings;  
Flutter, flutter go the leaves,  
Larks drop their wings.  
Little brooks, for all their mirth,  
Are not blithe as he!  
'Tell me what the love is worth  
That I give thee.'

"Speech that cannot be forborne  
Tells the story through:  
'I sowed my love in with the corn,  
And they both grew.  
Count the world full wide of girth,  
And hived honey sweet;  
But count the love of more worth  
Laid at thy feet.

"'Money's worth is house and land,  
Velvet coat and vest!  
Work's worth is bread in hand,  
Ay, and sweet rest.  
Wilt thou learn what love is worth?  
Ah! she sifs above,  
Sighing, 'Weigh me not with earth,  
Love's worth is love!'"

The singer had come yet more near, and would have been visible to her had not Bessie Maynard's looks been downcast and her head drooping low. When the song ended, and the step paused, she lifted her eyes, and saw James Keene standing before her smiling and waiting for the greeting she was so slow to give.

Surprise, and perhaps fear, deprived Bessie for a moment of her self-possession. "What! you here?" she exclaimed, without the least sign of courtesy; and with that exclamation broke down the barrier of silence that had existed between them.

"Why should I not be here?" he asked quietly. "May not I also have memories connected with this place? It was here I recovered health, after an illness that nearly

cost me my life. It was here I shot my first bear. And it was here I first saw you."

Bessie perceived at once that, if the old reserve was to be maintained, she must immediately assume an air of decisive politeness. For an instant she wavered. Silence may be best for those who are doubtful of themselves, and, not willing to commit any flagrant wrong, are still not resolved to be absolutely honest. But when we are strong in the determination to be sincere, and to let the light of day shine not only on our actions, but on our inmost thoughts, then, perhaps, by speech we may most nobly and effectually establish our position.

Bessie Maynard, therefore, waited for the words which would give her an opportunity to put an end to the tacit and vague understanding existing between them.

He read her silence rightly: it was a command for him to speak; and he obeyed it, though the pale face and large downcast lids gave little hope of any such answer as he might wish to receive.

"In those old days, so long ago, when I came here to try what a half-savage life would do for me, and was astonished to find a delicate human flower in the wilderness, I was a prophet."

He leaned on the cedar bar that separated them, and looked dreamily off toward the woods. He would not surprise in her face any involuntary expression she might wish to conceal from him; he would take advantage of no impulse. If she came to him, she must come deliberately. For, setting aside Christ-

ianity—and he did not pretend to believe in it—James Keene had an exceptionally honorable nature. He would gladly have taken this woman away from a husband who, he believed, knew not how to value her, and who made her miserable by his neglect, but he held that it would be no wrong for him to do so.

"Yes; I was a prophet," he continued; "for I believed then, what I am sure of now, that your marriage was a most unwise one. Give me credit, Bessie, for having been sincerely pained to see that, as years passed away, you had reason to come to the same conclusion. Whatever selfish wishes I may have had, I would at any time have renounced them could I have seen you happy with the man you chose to marry, knowing no other."

Bessie lifted her eyes, and looked at him with a steady, tearful gaze. "People might say that you are wicked to speak so to me," she said; "but I think that, according to your belief, you are very good; only you have no faith in religion. I esteem you so highly that I am going to make a confession which, perhaps, you may think I ought not to make. There have been times during these last few years when, if I had not had some little lingering faith, I would have welcomed from you an affection which I have no right to receive. There have been times when you might have spoken as lovingly as you could, and I should not have been angry. I tell you this partly because you must have at least suspected that it was so. And more than this. If I had seen you here a few days ago, my impulse would have been to

welcome you more ardently than I ever yet welcomed any friend. You can understand how it all has been, without my explaining. I was so lonely, so neglected! I was so lonely!"

She had spoken with a sad earnestness, and there was something touchingly humble yet dignified in her manner; but, at the last words, her voice trembled and failed.

He was looking at her now. Excitement and suspense showed in the sparkling of his clear blue eyes, in the slight flush that colored his usually pale face, in the lips firmly compressed.

"All is changed now," she went on. "I have been recalled to my religion, to my duty. I do not think that you should any more show me that sympathy which you have shown, and I do not think that you should see me frequently. I thank you for your kindness toward me. It has often been a comfort. But I am a wife"—she lifted herself with a stately gesture, and for the first time a wave of proud color swept over her face—"and the sadness which my husband may cause me no other man may ever again soothe."

There was silence for a moment. The gentleman's face had grown pale. There was a boundless tenderness in his heart for this fair and sorrowful woman, and he was about to lose the power to offer her even the slightest comfort, while at the same time he must still retain the knowledge of her suffering.

"I shall respect your wish and your decision," he said, with emotion. "Forgive me if I have trespassed too much in the past. It seemed to me very little; for, Bessie, if I had not known that you had a religious feeling which would have held you back, or would have made you miserable in yielding, I should long ago have

held out my hand to you, and asked you to come to me. If I had felt sure of being able to convince you beyond the possibility of subsequent regret, I should not have kept silence so long. But I respect your conscience. I should esteem myself a criminal if I could ask you to do what you believe to be wrong."

Bessie Maynard's face was covered with a blush of shame. Her thought had never gone consciously beyond the length of tender, brotherly kindness, and it was cruelly humiliating to see in its true light the position in which she had really stood. At that moment, too, she first perceived what a gulf lay between her soul and that of the man who had seemed always so dangerously harmonious with her. In principle, in all that firmly underlies the changeful tide of feeling, they were antagonistic; for he could speak calmly and with dignity of a possibility from which she shrank with a protesting tremor in every fibre of her being.

"I am going back to my husband," she said, "and I shall never again forget that his honor and dignity are mine. I have been weak and childish, and more wicked than I knew or meant, and it all came because I loved my husband too much and God too little. But I trust"—she clasped her hands, and lifted her eyes—"I trust that I shall have strength to begin now a new life, and correct the mistakes of the past."

She forgot for a moment that she was not alone, and stood looking away, as if there stretched before her gaze the new and loftier pathway in which she was to tread. Her companion gazed at her unchecked, with searching, melancholy eyes, not more because she was dearer to him in her impregnable fortress of Christian will than she ever had been in her human

weakness, than because there rose from the depths of his restless soul a cry of longing for that firm foundation and trust which can hold a man in the place where conscience sets him, no matter how the tempests of passion may beat upon his trembling heart.

"There is, then, nothing left me but to say farewell."

The poignant regret his voice betrayed recalled her attention.

"It has come to that," she said gently. "But if you could know all I mean in saying farewell to you, it would not seem an idle word; for I hope and pray that you may fare so well as to come before long into the church. It is a refuge from every danger and every trouble, and I have only just found it out! Good-by."

She gave him her hand, and they separated without another word. But Bessie did not stop to look after this visitor. Whatever regret she might otherwise have felt was swallowed up in the one thought—it had seemed to him possible that she might leave, not only her husband, but her sacred, sainted babes, and go to him! To what a depth had she fallen!

When she had disappeared in the house, he strolled slowly down the road. Unless you had looked in his face, you would have taken him for a man who was calmly enjoying the contemplation of nature in that forest solitude. But from his face looked forth a spirit weary and hopeless that hastened not, because it beheld nowhere a place worth making haste to reach. Once only the gloom of his countenance lifted, and then it was with no cheering brightness, but as the cloud is momentarily illuminated by angry lightning.

A man was coming up the road, not such a man as one usually sees in these wild places, but one who bore

the marks of city training and habits. The uniform gray clothing, the wide Panama hat, even the unobtrusive necktie, belonged to the city. This man was taller and broader-shouldered than he whose eyes flashed out so scornfully at sight of him. His face was dark, vivid, and clean-shaven, the forehead was wide, the dark-brown hair closely cut, the gray eyes clear and penetrating. It was a face fitter to carve in stone than to paint, for its color and expression were less noticeable than its fine, strong outlines.

Yet now there shone a soft and eager light over that granite strength. There was a look of glad surprise, mingled with a certain amused self-chiding, as though of one who comes back from a long and gloomy abstraction, and finds a half-forgotten delight still waiting at his side.

At sight of this man, James Keene's first emotion had been one of anger, his first impulse to meet him boldly and with scorn. But scarcely had he taken one quickened step before he stopped, with a revulsion of feeling as unsuspected as it was confounding. Reason as he might, emancipate himself as he might from what he considered the superstitions of religion, he found himself now overwhelmed with confusion. He strove to call up to his mind all those arguments on which he had founded himself, but they fell dead. Whether it was the instinct of a noble heart that would not betray even an enemy, or an irradicable root of that religious faith which had been implanted in his childhood, or the strangeness of one who for the first time acts on principles long maintained in theory, or only a sensitive perception of the esteem in which the faithful world would hold his action, he could not have told. He only knew that, in-



stead of standing, lofty and serene, in the dawn of this new light before which superstition and oppression were to pass away, he felt as if he were surrounded by a baleful glare from the nether fires. Sudden and scathing, it caught him, and burned his courage out like chaff.

In his eagerness and preoccupation, John Maynard had scarcely observed the person who approached; and, when the stranger turned aside into a wood-path, he gave him no further thought.

There was the little crooked house squinting at him out of its two windows, with the boards he had nailed, the chimney he had built, the door he had hung; there was the whole wild, rude place, with everything askew, that had once seemed a paradise—that had been a paradise—to him. With his hands and eyes educated, as they were now, to the utmost precision of outline and balance, the sight made him laugh out; and yet the laugh expressed as much pleasure as mockery.

He was taking his first holiday since he had left this house, and everything was delightfully fresh and novel yet familiar to him. He did not see the beauty that a poet or a painter would have found in that unpruned rusticity, for he was an artist of the exact; but the wabbly frame-house, the reeling fences, the road that wound irregularly, the straggling trees that leaned away from the northwest, made a good background against which to contemplate the trim and shining creatures of his hands, regular to a hair's breadth, unvarying and direct.

Coming to the bars, he threw himself over instead of letting them down, and found that he had grown heavier and less lithe than he was when last he performed that feat. He walked up the rocky path, his

heart beating fast as he thought of the old time, and of the slim, bright-faced girl he had brought there as a bride. If she could stand in the doorway now, as she was then, and smile at him coming home, he felt that he could be the old lover again. He had a vague idea that Bessie had grown older, and sober, and pale. Come to think of it, he hadn't known much of her lately, and she had been dissatisfied about something. Why had she allowed him to get his eyes and ears so full of machinery? Surely he had lost and overlooked much. He had a mind to complain of her, only that he felt so good-natured.

At sound of a step, Aunt Nancy went to the door; but at that sound Bessie took her sewing, and bent over it. Had James Keene repented their hasty parting?

"Does Miss Bessie Ware live here?" asked the gentleman, with immense dignity.

"Bessie Ware?" repeated Aunt Nancy, in bewilderment; then, as the recollection of Bessie's confessions flashed into her mind, she stiffened herself up, and answered severely: "No, sir, she does not!"

"The idea of his refusing to give her her husband's name!" she thought indignantly.

"Why, John!" exclaimed Bessie, over the old lady's shoulder.

Aunt Nancy gave a cry of delight. She would at any time have welcomed John rapturously; but his coming now made her twice glad. Of course he and Bessie would make it all up.

The exuberance of her welcome covered, at first, the wife's deficiency. But when the excitement was over, and they had gone into the house, Bessie's coldness and embarrassment became evident.

"I am very much surprised to see you here," she said, when her hus-

band looked at her. She did not pretend to be glad.

"Are you sorry?" he asked, with a laugh.

"I am too much astonished to be anything else," she replied quietly. "What made you come?"

John Maynard was disappointed and mortified. That for years he had met his wife's affectionate advances as coldly he did not seem aware. Other things had occupied his thoughts. He did not recollect, as he had not noticed at the time, that her manner was now just what it had long been.

Supper was over, eaten in an absent way by the husband, who glanced every moment at his wife. He found her very lovely, though different enough from the glad, girlish bride who had once brightened this humble room for him. He could not understand her. Had she no recollection of those days?

She did not seem to have, indeed, for she made no reference to them by look nor speech, but talked rapidly, and with an air of constraint, of things nearer in time, and listened with affected interest while he told the latest city news, and the latest news of his own work; how high the engine spouted; of the tiny model locomotive he had built, all silver, and gold, and fine steel; of the money he expected to make by his new patent; of an accident that had happened in his shop—a German organist, with two or three others, had come to look at his machinery, and got his hand crushed in it, which would put a stop to his playing.

Bessie looked up with an expression of pain. "Poor man!" she murmured. "How miserable he must be!"

"Yes; I was sorry for him," the husband replied. "They say he

cared for nothing but music. His name is Verheyden."

"Poor man!" Bessie sighed again, looking down. "Those machines are always hurting some one."

"It was his own fault," the machinist said hastily. "Did he suppose that the engine was going to stop when he put his forefinger on it? Why, that machine would grind up an elephant, and never mistake its face. But it is the first time any one was ever hurt by a machine of mine."

He did not understand the glance she gave him. It was not pleasant, but what it meant he knew not. She was thinking: "It is not the first time one has been hurt so."

Aunt Nancy found business elsewhere, and left the couple to themselves.

"I forgot you were coming away that day, Bessie," her husband said hastily, the moment they were alone. "I never thought of it till I was five miles off, and then I concluded that you must have changed your mind, or you would have told me not to go."

"You know I never tell you not to go anywhere," she replied coldly.

He colored. "But you know that I didn't mean to have you go to the depot alone. When I read what you wrote to Jamie, I felt sorry enough."

In all the long years that were past, how generously would she have met an apology like this! How quickly would she have disclaimed all sense of injury, and even have tried to find some fault in herself! But now her heart, with all its impulses, seemed frozen. She only gave him a glance of surprise, and a quiet word. "There was no need of company, I knew the way."

There was silence. Gradually, through the deep unconsciousness

and abstraction of the man, came out incident after incident of their late life, slight, but significant. Each had seemed a detached trifle at the time, but now as he sat there, abashed and ill at ease, they began to show a connection and to grow in importance. It was as when, in a thick fog, the sailor sees dimly a black speck that may be only a floating stick, and another, and another, till, looking sharply, as the mist grows thinner, he finds himself caught among rocks at low tide.

John Maynard tried to throw off with a laugh the weight that oppressed him. "Come, Bessie, let the late past go, and remember only the life we lived here. Let's be young people again."

He went to her side, bent down, and would have kissed her, had she not evaded his touch, not shyly, but with a crimson blush and a quick flash of the eyes.

"Don't talk nonsense, John!" she said, in a low voice that did not hide a haughty aversion. "Let us speak of something sensible. I have been thinking that some of our ways should be changed at home. I shall begin with myself, and attend strictly to my religion. Besides, I am not doing rightly in allowing James to grow up without any discipline, and I think he should be placed in a Catholic school, where he will be taught his duty. He is quite beyond my control."

Her morbid humility and diffidence were gone. The feeling that had made her give up all rights rather than ask for them did not outlive the moment of her reconciliation with the church.

"I am willing he should go to any school you choose," her husband replied gravely, impressed by the change. "I suppose the boy is going on rather too much as he likes.

Do whatever you think best about it, and I will see that he obeys."

She thanked him gently, and continued: "I shall go to High Mass after this, and I should be glad to have you go with me, if you are willing. It would be a better example for James than to see you go to the shop on Sundays. He is becoming quite lawless. We have no right to give our children a bad example. I would be glad to have you go with me, if you will."

John Maynard's face was glowing red. He felt, gently as she spoke, as if he were having the law read to him. "I am willing to go with you, Bessie," he said. "I am not a Catholic, but I am not anything else."

She thanked him again, earnestly this time, for it was a favor he had granted her, and she knew that he would keep his word. "You are good to promise that," she said.

He laughed uneasily. "Have you anything else to ask?"

"I do not think of anything," she replied, and there was silence.

The husband got up, and went to the door. The sun was sinking down the west. He looked at the glow it made, and remembered how he had seen it there in the days that were past, how quiet and peaceful his life had been, how much happier, had he but known it, than in the turmoil of later years. Then the days had been full of healthful employment, the nights of rest and refreshment, untroubled by the feverish dreams that now swarmed in his sleeping hours. And what was it that had made his life so happy? What had been the motive, the delight of everything? Nothing but Bessie, always Bessie, his help and his reward.

He turned his face, and saw her still sitting there, her head drooping, her hands folded in her lap. Those

hands caught his glance. They were pale and thin. They looked as though she had suffered.

He went to her impulsively as his heart stirred, and put his arm about her shoulder. "Bessie, forget the last years, and let's be as we were in the happy old time."

She did not look angry; but she withdrew herself gently from him.

"John," she said, "that is too much to expect at once. Years of pain cannot be forgotten in a moment. When you came to-day, you asked if Bessie Ware lived here. She does not. The Bessie Ware you married is dead. I scarcely know yet who or what I am. I only know that I shall try to do my duty by you, and repair some of the faults and mistakes of the past. But, John, I must warn you that it is harder to reconcile an estranged wife than to win a bride."

One piercing glance, angry and disappointed, shot from his eyes; then he went to the outer door. He stood a moment on the threshold, then stepped on to the greensward. Another pause, and he walked slowly back through the garden, seeming not to know whither he went.

Aunt Nancy, anxiously awaiting signs of reconciliation, saw him wander about aimlessly, then go and lean on a fence next the woods, his back to the house.

She went into the front room at once. She was on John's side now.

"Bessie," she said decidedly, "you mustn't stand too much on your dignity with John. Men are stupid creatures, and do a good many hard things without meaning or knowing; and, if they come round, it isn't wise to keep them waiting too long for a kind word."

Bessie Maynard laid down the work she was pretending to do, and her

hands trembled. "I am not acting a part, Aunt Nancy," she said, "and I cannot be a hypocrite. I feel cold toward John. And I feel displeased when he comes and kisses me, as if he were conferring a favor, and expects me to be happy for that. I could not give up if I would, I ought not if I could. There is something more required than a little sweet talk."

A half hour passed, and still John Maynard stood motionless, with his elbows leaning on the fence, and his head bowed. If Bessie had seen his face, it would have reminded her of the time when he first studied mechanics, and became so absorbed in the one subject as to be dead to all else. But there was the difference that he studied then with a vivid interest, and now with gloomy intentness.

An hour passed, and still he stood there; and the sun was down, and the moon beginning to show its pearly light through the fading richness of the gloaming. The birds had ceased singing, and there was no voice of wild creatures in the woods. It was the hour for prayer and peace-making.

John Maynard started from his abstraction, hearing his name spoken by some one. "John!" said Bessie. She had been watching him for some time from the door, and had approached slowly, step by step, unheard by him.

He turned toward her a pale, unsmiling face. "How late it is!" he said. "I must make haste."

She spoke hesitatingly, something doubtful and wistful in her face. "I have been thinking that I might have received you better, when you came on this long journey. Won't you come in now and rest? I didn't mean to turn you out of the house that you made—for me."

He turned his eyes away. "And I've been thinking, Bessie, that I'd better go right back again; I can go down to the post-office to-night, and take the stage to-morrow morning."

"You will not go!" she said.

"I should only spoil your visit," he went on. "I don't want you to begin to 'do your duty' by me just now. I know, Bessie, that you had a good deal to complain of; but I swear to you that I did not mean to be hard. You know I had twenty-five years to make up; and I was always looking for better times. I was so blind that I was fool enough to think you would be glad to see me here, and that we could begin over again where we began first."

She did not answer a word. There is something confounding in the sudden humiliation of a man who has always been almost contemptuously dominant.

He looked at his watch. "I must make haste, or they will be in bed," he said. "Make some sort of an excuse to Aunt Nancy for me. And when you want to come back, let me know, and I will meet you at the depot or come after you."

He started, and she walked beside him down the path to the road. He seemed hardly able to hold his head up.

She walked nearer, and slipped her hand in his arm, speaking softly: "I said a little while ago that the pain of years cannot be forgotten in a moment. But I was wrong. I think it may."

He looked at her quickly, but said nothing, and they reached the bars. Neither made any motion to let down the pole. They leaned on it a minute in silence.

"The fact is, Bessie," the husband burst forth, "I've been like a man

possessed by an evil spirit. I'm sorry, and that is all I can say."

"No matter, Jack! Let it all go!" his wife exclaimed, clasping her hands on his arm, and holding it close to him. "You weren't to blame!" (Oh! wonderful feminine consistency!) "Let's forget everything unpleasant, and remember only the good. How you have had to work and study, poor, dear Jack! You must rest now, and never get into the old drudging way again."

Aunt Nancy raked up the fire, and put down the window, looking out now and then at the couple who leaned on the bar below. Each time she looked, their forms were less distinct in the twilight. "That's just the way they used to do fifteen years ago," she muttered contentedly.

She sat a few minutes waiting, but they did not come in. Aunt Nancy sighed and laughed too. "It beats all how women do change their minds," she said. "I did think that Bessie would hold out longer. Well, I may as well go to bed."

By-and-by she heard them come into the kitchen.

"Now, I shut the doors and windows, and you rake up the fire," Bessie said. "Do you remember it was always so, Jack?"

"Of course I do, little one," was the answer. "But Aunt Nancy has got the start of us to-night."

"Aunt Nancy!" repeated Bessie, in a lower voice. "I declare, Jack, I forgot all about her."

"I'll warrant you did!" says Aunt Nancy to herself, rather grimly, perhaps.

"We will be sure to keep all our good resolutions, won't we?" Bessie said.

"All right!" says John.

The door shut softly behind them, and there were silence, and peace, and hope in the house that Jack built.

## JOHN.

IN beauty, not above criticism ; in courage, undaunted ; in love, most generous and most forgiving ; in patience, rivalling Job ; in constancy, unswerving ; in humility, without an equal.

After the above enumeration of qualities, it should be superfluous to add that John is a dog. It would be ridiculous to expect so much of a man. He is, moreover, a Skye-terrier, well-born and well-bred.

To announce to John's acquaintances that one was about to eulogize the dog would be to incur and deserve some such reply as that made by the Spartan to a rhetorician who announced his intention to pronounce an eulogium on Hercules : "An eulogium on Hercules ?" repeated the Spartan. "Who ever thought of blaming Hercules ?"

Our reply would be that we write, not for those who deny, but for those who never heard.

There is no shifting of scenes in our little drama. The unities are preserved with almost Grecian strictness ; the writer, however, as chorus, claiming the privilege of being occasionally discursive.

*Scene.*—A suburban summer residence in that most magnificent of seasons, autumn, "in that month of all months in the year," October ; furthermore, the most perfect of October. The stone-colored house is the only neutral bit in the landscape ; all else is a glow of color. The fresh greensward recedes under flower-bosses of solid brilliancy. A flower carpet, gayer than any loom of Turkey, Brussels, or France ever wove, lies under the clump of ever-

greens in a far corner of the estate. Tapestries of woodbine hang over balconies, and porches, and bay-windows ; and the noble trees that stand, two and two, in stately pairs, all about the place, and up the avenue, are a torchlight procession, which sunshine, instead of quenching, fires to a still more dazzling blaze. It is that picturesque time when ladies throw gay scarfs over the summer dresses they still wear ; when the sky shakes out her violet mists to veil the too divine beauty of earth ; that season of exquisite comfort when one has open windows and open fires ; that delicious season when fruit is brought to the table still warm with the sunshine in which it finished ripening five minutes before. Above all, it is that season when people who are at all sympathetic are inclined to silence.

Mrs. Marcia Clay was not at all sympathetic. She was simply herself, a frivolous woman, with a strong will, and a Chinese wall of selfishness and self-complacence built up on all sides of her. The soft "Hush !" on the lips of the Indian summer, when the soul of Nature plumes her wings for flight, she heard not. The suspense, the regret, the melancholy, the fleeting rapture of the season she perceived not. To her it was merely the fall of the year, when people get ready for the winter, lay in coal, buy new clothes, and go back to town.

Flounced to the waist in rattling silk, her fair hair furbelowed all over her head, and, apparently, pounds of gold hanging from her ears, thrust through her cuffs, dangling at her belt, strung about her neck, and fast-

ened to the pin that held her collar, this lady sat in one of the pleasant parlors of her house, and talked as fast as her tongue could run.

The woman who listened was of another kind, one who might have come to something if she had been possessed of will and courage, but who, having a small opinion of herself, was only somebody by little spurts, which did no good, since they were always followed by unusual self-abasement. She was not without a despairing sense of this incongruity, and had more than once bewailed in her own mind the fact that she was neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, but inclined to each in turn; had little wings which, as she spread them, changed to little fins, which, as she moved them, became little feet, that, when she would have walked, collapsed utterly, and left her floundering—a woman without moral vertebrae, who had been all her life the prey of people in whom the moral vertebrae were in excess. She was nothing in particular, physically, either, being greyish, oldish, tallish, weakish, and dressed in that time-honored, thin plain black silk gown which is the infallible sign of genteel poverty, and which, at this instant, adorns the form that owns the arm that moves the hand that holds the pen that writes this history.

*Mrs. Marcia Clay.*—"It is very provoking, my dear, but it can't be helped. If I should intimate to him that our trunks are all packed to go in town, he would leave instantly. He is the most touchy of mortals. To be sure, I have invited him here again and again, but I expected him in summer-time, not when we were on the point of moving, and had our very beds half made in the city. There's nothing for it but to unpack, and pretend to be delighted. Fortunately, he amuses himself."

The uncertain person in the black silk gown ventured to suggest that Mr. Bently might accompany them to town, and was met by a little shriek which made her jump.

"Fancy him in my blue satin or pink satin chamber! Why, my dear, he smokes, and—*chews! chews*, dear! Between you and me, he is a bear in his habits, a positive bear. If you will believe me, I have seen him wear slipshod shoes and crumpled linen. You should see him at home, in his den. An inky dressing-gown that he wipes his pens on, old slippers with holes in them, books piled all about, and dust that you could write your name in! In that state he sits and writes hour after hour."

Ah! Mrs. Clay & Co., who look at littleness through magnifying glasses, and are blind to all true greatness, the sole of this man's slipshod shoe is cleaner than your tongue. There is no dust on his thoughts; there are no holes in the fabrics his brain weaves; and when he writes, far-away lands that know you not, and kindred greatness nearer by, feel the electric spark that slips from his pen's point.

"What a shocking person he must be!" says Miss Uncertainty, meaning to please. "I don't wonder you won't have him in town."

"Goodness gracious, Miss Bird!" cried the lady, coloring up. "What can you be thinking of! Why, Mr. Bently is famous. He can afford to be eccentric. It is an honor to have him in one's house. People have turned and looked at me when they heard that I am his cousin; and his name opens to me places that—well, everybody can't enter. Then it is a very fine thing to have a gentleman in one's parlors who can talk to those lions whom one doesn't know what to say to, and who can tell what one's pictures, and bronzes, and

marbles mean, and translate from every language under the sun. I well remember a time when he won for me a perfect triumph over Mrs. Everett Adams. It was delicious. Mrs. Everett Adams is always picking up lions, especially learned and scientific ones, and, when Professor Porson came here, she monopolized him at once. You cannot conceive how odiously she behaved, nor what airs she assumed. One heard nothing but Porson, Porson, till I was sick of the name; and it was impossible to go anywhere, to theatre, opera, or concert, without seeing her sail down to the most conspicuous place, after everybody was seated, with Prof. Porson in her train. Well, one evening she brought him to our house, just to plague me, and we had half a dozen or so persons to meet him. It was an evening of torment, my dear. The professor was in the clouds, with Mrs. Everett Adams fluttering behind him, like a tail after a kite, and all the rest were in raptures, except me—I was extinguished. The professor knew what every bronze and marble was, and who made it, and if it was an original or a copy; and, in short, everything I had seen as common as possible. As a last desperate resort, I brought out some old books in foreign languages that poor dear Clay had picked up. He was always collecting things of that sort. The professor turned them over with the tips of his fingers, and read a word here and there. Oh! he knew all about them. Yes; he had read them when he was a boy. But I had begun to suspect him. My poor husband used to say that, when a man will not own that there is anything he doesn't understand, root and branch, he was always sure that that man was an impostor. So I took up two of the books that I saw he had passed over, and asked

him to translate a passage for me. They looked about as much like a printed language as the figures on my carpet do. To my joy, he had to own that he couldn't. They were Chaldaic, he said, and he had made but little study in that language. Mrs. Adams glanced angrily at me, and I smiled. Just at that moment, as good luck would have it, the door opened, and in came Cousin Bently. I flew at him with the books. Triumph, my dear! Never did I have such a rapturous moment. Cousin took the books up in his slow way, put up his eye-glasses, and looked them over in such a superior manner that really my hopes rose. They were Arabic, I've forgotten what about, and he read out some passages, and translated them, all the company looking on. My dear, the Porson and Adams stock sank to less than one per cent. in an instant. The professor was red, and Mrs. Adams was pale. I could have hugged Cousin Bently on the spot, though his boots were not blacked, and his collar was in a positively shocking state."

"How charming it must be to have him visit you!" says Miss Bird, wheeling about as the wind veered.

Poor thing! She did not mean to be insincere. She merely wanted to say the right thing, and didn't care a fig about the matter, one way or the other.

"Charming!" repeated Mrs. Clay, with emphasis. "It gives a *tone*. Besides, it draws some people one likes to know. You should see Madame de Soi, the most exclusive of women, flutter round him like a butterfly round a—round a—well, really, I am at a loss for the word. It is impossible to call Cousin Bently a flower, unless one should make a pun about the seedy contents of his valise. I studied botany once, and I



know a pun can be made of it. Madame knows no more and cares no more about his learning than a cat does, but she has tact, and does contrive to smile at the right time. I never could do that. When I smile, Cousin Bently is sure to push out his under lip, and stop talking. But she will look and listen with such rapture that you would positively think he were describing the dress the empress wore at the last ball; and sometimes she even says something that he will seem pleased with. That very evening of the Porson collapse she talked with him half an hour of *molecules*, whatever they are. I actually thought they were speaking of people. Fancy being called a molecule! Yes, Cousin Bently is a great credit, and a great convenience to me. Why, but for him, I couldn't have gone to those stupid exclusive lectures of Mr. Vertebrare's, where I yawned myself to death among the very cream of society."

The lady paused for breath, and her companion, feeling obliged to say something, faltered out that she always feared those very clever persons.

"I should think you would after the experience you had with that dragon," replied Mrs. Clay significantly.

Miss Bird colored, and was silent. "That dragon" was a rather difficult old lady, a Miss Clinton, with whom she had lived and suffered many years, and who had lately died.

"And so," Mrs. Clay summed up, "I have Cousin Bently on my hands for a week or ten days, and must make the best of it. And"—suddenly lowering her voice—"speak of angels—ahem! Cousin Bently, allow me to make you acquainted with Miss Bird, an old schoolmate of mine."

Miss Bird rose with a frightened air, dropped her eyes, blushed deep-

ly, half extended her hand, and half withdrew it again, and stammered out, "Good-morning, sir!" which was not a very felicitous greeting, the time of day being near sunset.

Mr. Bently acknowledged the introduction with rather a stately bow, gave the person before him a calm and exhaustive glance, protruded his under lip very slightly, without meaning to, and walked to the further end of the room.

"Why need people be such fools?" he muttered, half philosophical, half impatient. He had been, as all learned and even merely clever people must be, too much looked on as an ogre by the simple. It was rather provoking to see people shaking at his approach, as if he were going to compel them to talk Greek and calculus, or have their lives.

As the gentleman seated himself in an arm-chair before a delightful bay-window, and facing the window, there was another addition to the company, and—enter our hero!

Reader, John!

A longish, curly-haired quadruped with bright dark eyes full of merriment and kindness, and teeth so beautifully white and even that it would be a privilege to be bitten by them. Of course he has undergone those improvements which man finds it necessary to make in the old-fashioned plan of the Creator, and his clipped ears stand up pointed and pert, and his clipped tail is indeed less a tail than an epigram. But the bounding grace of his motions no scissors can curtail.

Do not imagine that John has entered the room properly, and stood still to be presented and described. Far from it. He bounced in through the window, as though shot from a mortar, and, while we have been writing this brief sketch of his person, has flown into the learned gentleman's

arms, kissed him enthusiastically a dozen times, pawed his hair into fearful disorder, made believe bite his nose and hands, with the utmost care not to hurt him in the least, pulled one end of his cravat out of knot, and threatened to overturn him, chair and all, by drawing back and rushing at him again like a little blue and yellow battering-ram. His manner was, indeed, so overpowering that Mr. Bently had half a mind to be vexed, and could not help being disconcerted. His affection for dogs was entirely Platonic, and he had a theory that bipeds and quadrupeds should have separate houses built for them; but this creature had struck him as being the most honest and sensible being in the house, and had, moreover, taken to him.

Miss Bird looked askance at the scene in the bay-window, and Mrs. Clay looked askance at Miss Bird, and wondered at her impudence and folly. Bird had blushed and dropped her eyes when she was introduced to the gentleman, and she was now watching him out of the corners of her eyes. Bird was an old maid, with a moderate annuity; Mr. Bently was an old bachelor, with next to nothing beside brains and a name. Bird must be set to rights. So much the lady's actions told of her thoughts.

"I wish I dared send for Marian Willis here," she whispered confidentially, watching the effect of her words. "Nothing would please me better than to bring those two together again. But Cousin Bently would suspect my drift, and, as likely as not, start off at once. Nothing annoys him so much as to see that any one is trying to get him married. Marian is in every way suitable, and between you and me, dear, I think they would both be glad to have a mediator, only they are too proud to own it. Everybody thought about

ten years ago that they were engaged, and they certainly were in a fair way to be, when some lovers' quarrel occurred, and they parted. You have never seen Miss Willis, have you?"

Yes; Bird had seen her at Miss Melicent Yorke's wedding, and she was the grandest looking lady there. She wore a black velvet dress, buttoned up high with diamonds, and not another jewel about her. She had a pink half-open camellia in her bosom, and a wide-open one in her hair. Clara Yorke said that the beautiful plainness of Miss Willis' toilet made everybody else look all tags and ends. She gave the bride a rare engraving of some picture of The Visitation, which Miss Melicent didn't half like, because the S. Elizabeth was on her knees, and because there was a crown carved in the frame just over the Virgin's head. But the bridegroom had reconciled her to it, saying that motherhood is a crown to any woman. Mrs. Edith Yorke, Carl's wife, who is now abroad, was very fond of Miss Willis, and used to call her "Your Highness."

"Oh! their intimacy was because Mr. Carl Yorke was a Catholic," interposed Mrs. Clay rather abruptly.

When Bird got talking of the Yorkes, she never knew when to stop; and the subject was not pleasant to her listener. Mrs. Clay had tried to be intimate with the family, and had signally failed. Always kind and courteous, there still seemed to be an invisible crystalline wall between them and her.

"Marian's religion is her one fault. It may be possible that she and Cousin Bently disagreed about that, though it would be hard to find out what he believes, or if he believes anything. He defends every religion you attack, and attacks every religion you defend."

"But do you think she would marry

him?" asked Bird incredulously; and her glance toward the window became depreciatory and critical, instead of awful.

Mr. Bently, as a learned man, was to be regarded with fear and admiration; but as a bridegroom—that was another thing.

"Why, she is handsome and rich."

"What if she is?" asked the other tartly. "It only makes her more suitable. But she is not rich, though she lives with a rich old uncle, who may leave her something. She is in every way suited to Cousin Bently. He would never marry an inferior woman."

This last assertion Mrs. Clay made very positively, for the reason that she was mortally afraid it was not true. Her private opinion was that Mr. Bently must have been very lonely in his bachelor lodgings before he came to visit her, and that he might easily be induced to marry even Bird, rather than live alone any longer.

Meantime, the object of their conversation, having put the vociferous John away, and induced him to lie at his feet, instead of pervading his neck and face, sat gazing out through the window. He certainly was not an eminently beautiful man, neither was he a pink of nicety in his dress, though he abhorred untidiness in others, particularly in women. His form was rather fine, but his features were too strong for grace, his hair was growing gray, and his teeth were discolored by his odious beloved tobacco. There was something a little neglected in his appearance. Evidently he needed some one with authority to remind him, when occasion demanded, that his cravat was horribly awry, that he had forgotten to smooth his hair down since the last time he combed it up with his ten fingers, and that, really, that col-

lar must come off. In fine, he needed an indulgent wife, who would look out for him constantly, but with discretion, never intruding the cravat and collar question into his sublime moments.

Was he conscious of something lacking in his life, that his expression was less the gravity of the man of thought than the sadness of the lonely man? Something ailed him—physical sickness, no doubt, for his face was flushed, and his eyes heavy—but some trouble of the mind also. He looked across the lawn, that was bounded by a dense line of autumn-colored trees, with a sky of brilliant clearness arching over. Betwixt sapphire and jasper the low purple dome of a mountain pushed up, making a background for a shining cross that might be suspended in air for any support visible to him who gazed on it. But he had seen that cross before, and his mind, leaping over the few intervening miles, followed down from its sunlighted tip and touched a slim gray tower and a vine-covered church, and, looking through the gay rose-window over the chancel, saw a tiny lambent flame floating in and fed by sacred oil of olives. Mentally he stood before the church door, saw the grove of beeches that hid it from the road, saw through those heavy boughs the green slope of a lawn near by and the mansion that crowned its summit. But in one respect the eyes of the seer were less true to the present than to the past, for they beheld roses, instead of autumn colors, wreathing pillar, porch, and balcony.

In this house Marian Willis lived. He sat and recollected all his intercourse with her, from the first pleasant dawn of friendly regard and sympathy, growing up to something brighter and closer, yet scarcely defined, to its sudden extinguishment

His acquaintance with her had been like a day that breaks in silent and cloudless light, and is shut in by a cold and smothering fog before its noon. What had been expressed to her of all that sweetness he found in her society? What to him of the pleasure she seemed to feel in his? Nothing that had other utterance than silent looks and actions. What had separated them? A mist, a fog, an impalpable yet irresistible power. Some tiny wedge had been inserted that gave a chance for pride to rush in and thrust their lives apart. There had been a slight reserve that grew to coldness and thence to alienation. Who does not know how those many little things make a mickle? Possibly a certain gallant officer, just home from the wars, with his arm in a sling, and a sabre-scar across his temple, had had something to do with the trouble. Certainly the last mental picture Mr. Bently had carried away from his last visit at Mr. Willis' was of this same officer walking in the garden with Marian Willis leaning on his sound arm, and listening to the tale of his adventures as women always do and always will listen to soldiers who bring their wounds to illustrate their stories.

On that occasion, Mr. Bently had returned to his cousin's house and behaved in what he considered a very reasonable manner. He locked himself into his chamber, let in all the light possible, placed himself before the mirror, and critically examined the reflection he saw there. There was no glorious sabre-wound across his temple, showing where he had once wrestled with death, and come off conqueror; but, instead, there were long, faint, horizontal lines beginning to show on his forehead—mementoes of the silent combat with time, and of anxious quest in search of hidden truth. There were

no crisp, fair curls shining over his head; the brown hair was straight and short, and here and there a white hair rewarded the search for it. The soldier's large violet eyes flashed like jewels; but these eyes in the mirror were no brighter than wintry skies, a calm, steady blue that a planet might look through, perhaps, but that were not used to lightning. The soldier was clad in a trim uniform that set off well a form of manly grace, the stripe that glimmered down the leg, the band, like a lady's bracelet, that bound the sleeve, the golden eagle outspread on either shoulder, all helping to make a gallant picture; the raiment reflected with pitiless fidelity by the mirror before him was decidedly neutral. No one could call it picturesque nor even elegant of its kind. It was simply calculated to escape censure.

Having made a full survey and, as he thought, a fair comparison, this self-elected judge then pronounced sentence on the person whose reflection he gazed at.

"You are a fool!" he said, with a conviction too deep for bitterness. "What is there in you that a fair and charming woman could prefer? Bah! She prizes you as she does those vellum Platos and Homers that she admires because others do, but cannot read a word of. When she sinks into her arm-chair for that hour of rest before dressing for dinner, does she take with her a book of Greek or of logic? No; she reads the poet or the novelist. You have nothing to do with her more intimate life."

Thus had the scholar decided, gazing at his own reflection in the mirror, seeing there only the shell of the man, and that not at its best, at its worst rather. The kindling of intelligence, the scintillating of sharp intellectual pursuit, the soft radiance which dawning love gave him when

he was shone upon by the beloved object—those he saw not. He saw only a fool.

So far, so good. But he had not finished the work. A fool may be miserable, may be ruined by his folly, even while owning it. He must not only prove the vanity of hoping, but the vanity of loving. He must remove the halo from his idol's brow, not rudely, but with all the coolness and gentleness of reason. What, after all, were beauty and grace, a sweet voice and smile, and gracious speaking? He set himself to analyze them, physiologically, chemically, and morally.

So the botanist analyzes a flower, and when he has destroyed its ravishing perfume, and that exquisite combination which constituted its individuality—a combination man can separate, but which only God can form—he points to the fragments, and says, "That is a rose!"

But suppose that, even while he speaks, those withering atoms should stir and brighten, the anthers should gather again their golden pollen, and hang themselves *once* more on each slender filament, the petals blush anew, and rustle into fragrant crowding circles, and a most rosy rose should rise triumphantly before him!

Some such experience had Mr. Bently when he had finished his work of demolition. Turning coldly away from the ruins of what had been so fair, he walked to the window to take breath, and saw there before him the living woman complete, her soul welding with immortal fire every characteristic and mood into a being irresistibly lovely, baffling, and—disdainful. She stood in the garden where Mrs. Clay had purposely detained her beneath his window, and she stood there unwillingly. Only a social necessity had brought her to the house, and she had determined

that she would not, if it could be helped, meet that gentleman *who*, from being a daily visitor of her own, had suffered three days to pass during which he had once or twice talked with her uncle over the gate, but had never approached her.

Since that hour when, looking from his window, he had seen her sail past without raising her eyes, Mr. Bently had been haunted at times by two antagonistic visions—the rose dissected, which he viewed with indifference, succeeded by the rose full-blown, triumphant in unassailable sweetness.

He thought it all over now as he sat looking out of Mrs. Clay's eastern bay-window. And having thought it over once, it began to go through his mind again, and still again. The various scenes passed, one by one, slowly, like persons in a procession, and he gazed at them from first to last; and there was the first again! He had had enough of it, but it would not stop. His head was aching, and feeling somewhat light besides. He pressed his forehead with his hands, and tried to think of something else, even if it were no more pleasant subject than the cold he must have taken to make him so sore from head to foot. But still that procession moved with accelerating speed. He spoke to John, tired and annoyed himself a little with the creature's antics, then leaned back in his chair, and let his brain whirl.

Certainly he was ill; but nothing else was certain. Whether to go or stay, to speak or remain silent, he could scarcely decide. When dinner was announced, instinct kept him conventional. He ate nothing, but he went through all the proper forms, with no more abstraction than might be attributed to his intellectual oddities. But dinner, with its inanities, over, he made haste to escape to his own room.

"Going out for a walk, cousin?" asked Mrs. Clay, as he passed her.

How the trivial question irritated him! He bowed, afraid to utter a word, lest it should be an offensive one. His nerves felt bare, his teeth on edge.

Miss Bird looked more deeply than her friend had, and in the one timid glance she gave the gentleman saw a painful trouble underneath his cool exterior.

"I hope he didn't hear what we were saying of him before dinner," she remarked apprehensively.

"No, indeed!" was the confident response. "He scarcely hears what you say to him, still less what is said of him."

"But he looked displeased," persisted the anxious Bird.

Mrs. Clay cast a sarcastic glance on her subordinate. "My dear," she said with decision, "the less you occupy yourself with my cousin's feelings, the better for you. Your solicitude will be quite thrown away."

Bird sighed faintly, and resigned herself to being snubbed.

Mr. Bently walked up-stairs slowly, dreading to be alone, and shut himself into his room; and, when there, desolation settled upon him. It is not pleasant to be sick in one's own home, with loving and solicitous friends surrounding one with their cares, and taking every task from the weak hands; it is still less pleasant when, though friends are near, they are powerless to lift the burden which only those helpless hands can carry; but how far more miserable, how far more cruel than any other desolation on earth, is it when sickness falls upon one who must work, and the sick one is not only oppressed by the burden of duties unperformed, but is himself a burden, coldly and grudgingly tended, or tended not at all? Mr. Bently knew well the extent of his

cousin's friendship, and the worth of her Chinese compliments, and he would far rather have fallen in the street, and been left to the tender mercies of strangers, than fall ill in her house.

Morning came, and it was breakfast-time, by no means an early hour. Mrs. Clay had put off the meal half an hour on her cousin's account. "He has at least one polite habit—he does not rise early," she said. "But then he is as regular as a clock in his late hour."

He was not prompt this morning, however, for they waited ten minutes after breakfast was on the table, and rang a second bell, and still their visitor did not appear.

Miss Bird suggested that he had looked unwell the evening before, and might be unable to come down.

"Really, how thoughtful you are!" Mrs. Clay said with cutting emphasis. "I had quite forgotten. Perhaps, my son, you will go up and see if Miss Bird is right."

"My son" objected to being made a messenger of. "If the old fellow wanted to sleep, let him sleep. Don't you say so, Clem?"

Clementina always agreed with her brother; the two prevailed, and the "old fellow" was left to sleep, or toss and moan, or be consumed with fever and thirst, or otherwise entertain himself as he or fate should choose, while the family breakfasted at their leisure.

It is scarcely worth while to put Clementina and Arthur Clay in print. They are insignificant and, in a small way, disagreeable objects, and their like is often met with to the annoyance of many. The mental ignorance and lack of capacity which we lose sight of when they are overmantled by the loveliness of good-will, in such as these become contemptible by being placed on

pedestals of presumption and ill-nature, and hateful when they are set as obstacles and stumbling-blocks in the way of souls who would fain walk and look upward.

Breakfast over, and no Mr. Bently appearing, Mrs. Clay felt called on to make inquiries, and, accordingly, dispatched a servant to her cousin's door, while she herself listened at the foot of the stairs. She heard a knock, but no reply, then a second knock, followed by the servant's voice, as if in answer to some one within.

"Paper under the door, sir? Yes, sir!"

She was half way up the stairs by this time, and snatched the slip of paper which the man had found pushed out under Mr. Bently's door. "What in the world can be the matter? Where are my eye-glasses? Cousin Bently is such a frightful writer that, really—"

While the lady is adjusting her glasses, and her children and companion are gathering about her, we will read this document, for there will be no time afterward. It is short, and is strongly scented with camphor.

"I am ill, and, it is possible, may have small-pox. It has been where I was a fortnight ago. Keep away from me, and send for a doctor."

Confusion ensued. Screams resounded from the parlor; orders and counter-orders were given, only one fixed idea penetrating that chaos—to get away from the house as quickly as possible. Carriages were got out, silver and valuables piled into them by Bird, who alone would go upstairs, and who was made to do everything, and in less than half an hour the whole family started for the city. The servants, all but the gardener, had already fled.

"But who is to take care of Mr.

Bently?" Bird asked, pausing at the carriage door.

"I shall give the gardener orders to get a doctor and nurse," Mrs. Clay said impatiently, fuming with selfish terror.

"But I'm not afraid," Bird hesitated. "I've been vaccinated. And it's hard to leave him alone."

"Nonsense!" cried the lady. "I shall allow nothing of the sort. It is not necessary, and, besides, it is not proper. Do get in, if you are going to town. It really seems to me, Miss Bird, that you are altogether too much interested in Mr. Bently."

Then, at last, Bird perceived what was in the speaker's mind, and, as most women would in such circumstances, laid down her better impulses at the feet of meanness. Crushed and ashamed, and, at the same time, weakly and despairingly angry, she took her place in the carriage, and listened in silence to the lamentations and complaints of her companions.

"How could Cousin Bently do such a thing? How could he come to me when he knew he had been so exposed?"

That Mr. Bently had only learned from the paper of the evening before to what he had been exposed, and had only thought during the night what might be the meaning of his illness, the lady did not inquire into.

At the garden gate stood James, the gardener. Mrs. Clay stopped long enough to give him hurried directions to get a doctor and nurse, and do all that was necessary for the invalid, then ordered the coachman to drive on.

"I hope John isn't with us," one of the young ones said presently. "He was round Cousin Bently all day yesterday."

No; Bird, recollecting that fact also, had shut John into one of the

chambers, and left him there. She ventured to hope that he would not be left to starve, but no one responded to her merciful wish.

The cause of all this terror and confusion had seen the departure of the family without being surprised at it. He had not undressed, but had lain on a sofa all night, and, when morning came, had written the warning which proved so effectual, and then sank into an arm-chair near the window, longing for air. He expected the family to keep away from him, and was neither sorry nor indignant that they had removed themselves still further. Of course a doctor would be sent, and of course there was some one to take care of him. He sat and waited for that some one to enter. Perhaps it was James. He saw the gardener shut and fasten the gate after the carriage went out, and he heard the locking of the stable door. He waited, but no one came. Well, the house must be attended to first, and he would be patient, though thirst, and alternate fever and chills, and racking pains were tormenting him. He was annoyed, too, by John's efforts to escape from the next room, and would have gone to release the creature but for the fear of spreading contagion.

A distant door opened and shut; he heard a distant heavy step, and thanked God that relief and companionship were at hand. But the sounds ceased, and no one came near him. He saw James, the gardener, laden with packages, hurry down the avenue, and disappear into the public road, and a thrill of fear shot through him. The scene outside swam before his eyes, and grew dark for a moment. Could it be that they had all gone away, and left him to die alone? No; he could not believe it! James had perhaps gone

to bring the doctor. He would wait patiently, since wait he must.

An hour passed, and no one came. There was no sound in the house but that occasional whining and barking from the next room; no sound outside except when a carriage rolled swiftly by in the road. He saw no person coming. It was impossible to endure that thirst any longer. He went into the bathroom, and wet his hands and face, and drank of the tepid water there. His head reeled at sight of the stairs, and he did not dare to attempt to descend. Returning to his chamber, he fell on to the sofa, and, for the first time in his life, fainted; coming back to life again as though emerging from outer darkness, but not into light—into a sickening half-light, rather. So hours passed, and he knew without a doubt that he was utterly deserted, and that a lonely and terrible death threatened him. Could he do nothing to avert it? He recollected that Mrs. Clay had a medicine closet in the bathroom. Possibly, if he could reach it, something might be found there to relieve, if not to cure, him. What mountains molehills can change into sometimes! This man, so strong and full of life but a day before, now lay and gave his whole mind to planning how he should save himself a few steps in going to the bathroom again, how he could avoid the stairs, lest he should fall, and whether he could this time cross the corridor to release that troublesome, whining dog. Whenever, weary and confused, he lost himself a moment in a half sleep, that whining and scratching assumed terrible proportions in his imagination, and became the fierce efforts of wild beasts to reach him. He started up now and then, with wide-open eyes, to assure himself that he was not in a menagerie; to fix in his mind the picture of that airy chamber, with



its clear tints of green and amber, its open windows showing the long veranda outside, and the bright perspective of foliage and sky.

But when his eyelids drooped again, and he sank back into half sleep and half fainting, back came the painful phantoms to torment him till they were once more chased away for a time.

Toward evening he roused himself to make that difficult pilgrimage of fifty paces in search of healing and refreshment, bathed eagerly his face and head, and found his cousin's medicine closet. But when he had reached that, his strength was nearly exhausted. He had only enough left to take down the laudanum bottle, and get back to his room with it. Laudanum might dull this pain, and quiet the excited nerves. Once more John must wait. He could not stop to release him.

The room in which the dog was confined had a window on the balcony that ran past Mr. Bently's room. That window was open, but the blind was shut, and John, despairing of escape through the door, had turned all his efforts toward unfastening this blind, and had several times been near success, when the spring, flying back, had defeated him.

The invalid's bath of cold water had refreshed him somewhat. He hated to take the laudanum. He had never been an intemperate man, and had always shrunk from swallowing anything which could in the least degree isolate his mind from the control of his will. He would bear the pain a little longer.

He lay there and thought, and visions of happy homes rose up before him. At this hour of early twilight, the lamps were being lighted, or people sat by firelight, and children, grown languid and sleepy with the long day's play, leaned silent on

their mothers' laps. At this hour, men of thought, intellectual workers, laid aside the weightier labors of their profession to indulge in an exhilarating contention of wits, so much happier than other workers, in that their recreations do not retard, but rather accelerate their work. It is but dancing at evening with Terpsichore, or pacing with Calliope along the margin of the same road which he had travelled by day in a dusty chariot, or walked encumbered by his armor. In their lighter intellectual contests, what sparks were sometimes struck out to live beyond the moment that gave them birth! What random beams of light shot now and then into seeming nothingness, and revealed an unsuspected treasure!

All these scenes of social comfort and delight rose before the sufferer's mind with tantalizing distinctness, fairer and fuller in the vision than he had ever known the reality to be. He felt like a houseless wanderer who, freezing and starving in the street, sees through lighted windows the warmth and joy of the home circle.

Mr. Bently was not a pious man. He had a deep sentiment of reverence, and a firm belief that somewhere there is an inflexible truth that deserves an obedience absolute and unquestioning. But controversy had spoiled him for religious feeling, which is, perhaps, too delicate for rough handling, and in the clash of warring creeds some freshness and spontaneity had been lost to his convictions. Reaching truth, winning battles for truth, he had been like a traveller at the end of a long journey, when he scarcely cares in his weariness for the goal attained, but must needs eat and sleep. He had spent too much time and strength in wiping away the mire flung on the garments of religion to be any longer

quick in enthusiastic homage. "Pity 'tis, 'tis true." The butterfly you would save from the net loses the down from its wings with your most careful handling; the friend you defend from calumny you dethrone even while defending. The feeling that dictated that brutal egotism, "Cæsar's wife must not be suspected," dwells in a less arrogant form in most human hearts, and rare indeed is that soul which sets its love as high, after even the most triumphantly refuted accusation, as it was before.

Desertion and imminent death chilled this man's heart, and he had no mind to turn to God, save in a cold recognition of his power and wisdom. Love entered not into his thoughts, but despair did.

The pain increased, the dizziness came back. He stretched his hand for the glass and vial of laudanum, and tried with a shaking hand to pour out what he could guess to be an ordinary potion. There was no reason why he should suspect that that bottle might have been standing in the house so long as to have made even the smallest dose of its contents deadly. As he measured, and tried to recollect how much he should take, pouring out unknowingly what would have been for him Lethe indeed, a louder rattle and bang at the blind of the next room proclaimed the success of the four-footed prisoner. There was a scampering on the veranda, a dog's head, eager and bright-eyed, was thrust in at the window of the sick-room, then, with an almost human cry of joy, John flew at its occupant.

Away went bottle and glass, breaking and spilling—no laudanum for Mr. Bently that day. Down went Mr. Bently among the sofa pillows, prostrated by the unexpected onset; and love, and delight, and absolute devotion, in the form of an up-

roarious Skye terrier, unconscious and uncaring for risks, nestled in the breast of the deserted man, were all over his face and neck, and through his hair, and speaking as plainly as though human speech had been their interpreters.

When the man comprehended, recovering from his first confusion, reason and endurance stood aside and veiled their faces, and a greater than they took their place.

Through a gush of tears which were but the spray of a subsiding wave of bitterness, this soul raised its eyes, and beheld a new light. It lost sight of the Almighty in a vision of the Heavenly Father.

The night that followed was painful, but not unsoothed. The dog, perceiving at once that his friend was ill, became quiet. He lay with head pressed close to the restless arm, and, if the sick man moaned, he answered with a pitying whine. Once he left the room, and wandered through the whole house in search of help, whined and scratched at every closed door, and, finding no one, came back with an air of distress and perplexity. Later, when Mr. Bently seemed very ill, John ran out onto the balcony, and barked loudly, as if calling for relief.

Morning came again, and the sick man's pain gave place to a deathlike faintness, resulting from lack of nourishment. For thirty-six hours nothing had passed his lips but water, and that no longer ran from the faucet when he tried it. He crept down-stairs, stair by stair, holding by the balusters, like a little child. There was no water to be seen in the dining-room, and he did not know where to find any. He reached the parlor, lay down on the floor, and prayed for death or for life—anything to put an end to that nightmare of misery. It seemed that

death was coming. His hands and feet grew cold with an unnatural chill, and, though the morning sunshine poured through the windows, all looked dim to his eyes. His senses seemed to be slowly receding, without pain, without any power or wish on his part to recall them. He lay and waited for death.

And while he waited, as one hears sounds in a dream he heard a door open and shut, then a quick, light step that ran up-stairs. John, standing over his friend, left him, and rushed to the parlor door, barking wildly, but was unable to get out, the door having swung to. In vain he tried it with his paws, and thrust his small nose into the crack. It was too heavy for him to move.

Suddenly, while Mr. Bently gazed with languid, half unconscious eyes at the creature, the door was pushed wide open, and a woman stood on the threshold. She was neither young nor old, but simply at the age of perfection, which is a variable age, according to the person. Her face was a full oval, but white now as hoar-frost. All its life seemed to centre in the large hazel eyes that were piercing with a terrified search. She wore her fair hair like a crown, piled high above the forehead in glossy coils like sculptured amber. Over one temple a black and gold moth was poised, as though it had just alighted there, its wings widespread. The long black folds of a velvet robe fell about her superb form, sweeping far back from her swift but suddenly arrested step. Scintillating fringes of gold quivered against the large white arms, edged the short Greek jacket, and ran in a single flash down either side of the train. A diamond cross lay like a sunbeam on her bosom, a single diamond twinkled in each small ear.

There was but an instant's pause,

then she crossed the room **quickly**, and knelt by him.

"My God! my God!" she murmured, and lifted his head on her arm. "What fiendish cruelty!"

Her touch and voice recalled him to himself. He tried to put her away. "Leave me, Marian, I beg of you! Do not endanger yourself for me!"

But even while bidding her go, every nerve in him grew alive with the joyous conviction that he would not be obeyed, and that, danger or no danger, she would not desert him. Here were strength, help, and the power to command. She brought the world with her, this queenly woman, who had not even snatched the gloves from her hands since last night's ball, but had hurried to seek news of him; after the first confused rumor, to call doctor and nurse, to rush to him herself with all the speed her panting horses could make.

"Leave you? Never!"

He asked no questions, but resigned himself. How delightful the sickness, how sweet the pain, that led to this! How thrice blessed the desertion that gave her to him!

In half an hour, the doctor had come and given his decision. Mr. Bently's illness was merely a violent cold with fever, and a few days of careful nursing would make all right. In another half hour, he was established in a pleasant chamber in Mr. Willis' house, with a nurse in close attendance, the whole family anxiously ministrant, John an immovable fixture in the sick-room; and, later, Mrs. Marcia Clay besieging the house for news of poor dear Cousin Bently, and protesting and explaining to the very coldest of listeners, declaring that nothing but her duty to her family, etc.; and what was the meaning of that broken bottle and glass, and ineradicable laudanum

stain on the carpet in her house? Was it possible that Cousin Bently had thought of taking any of that terrible stuff that she meant to have thrown away ages before? And would they bring down John? Arthur had asked for him.

Some one went to Mr. Bently's room for John, but came back without him. The invalid was reported to have flown into something like a passion on learning the messenger's errand, and to have held the dog firmly in his arms.

John was his! No one else should have him. Whatever crime it might be called to refuse to give him up—stealing, embezzling, false imprisonment—he was ready to be accused and convicted of it, and would go to jail for it with the dog in his arms.

Mrs. Clay was enchanted to be able to oblige her cousin in such a trifle, and would he speak freely when he wanted anything? and then went home and told all her family in confidence that Mr. Bently was a raving maniac.

Reader, according to our promises at the beginning of this history, we should stop here. The scene has changed, the time already exceeds twenty-four hours, and only the characters remain the same. But we have not done. There is something more which we are pining to tell. Shall we stop, then, and perish in silence, rather than transgress rules made by a people "dead and done with this many a year," whose whole country, with themselves on it, could have been thrown into one of our inland seas without making it spill over? No! Perish the unities!

*Scene II.*—Large parlor, rosy-tinted all through with reflections from sunset, from firelight, and from red draperies. After-dinner silence pervading, open folding-doors giving a view through a suite of rooms, in the

furthest of which an old gentleman sleeps in his arm-chair. Or, perhaps, it is a picture of a library, with an old gentleman asleep in it. The stillness is perfect enough for that. Mr. Bently, convalescent, first dinner down-stairs since his illness, stands near a window looking out, but watchful of the inside of the parlor, and of a lady who sits at an embroidery-frame near the same window. The lady is superficially dignified and tranquil, but there is an unusual color in the cheeks, and a slight unsteadiness in the fingers, which tell her secret conviction that something is going to happen. This is the first time the two have met since Miss Willis found the deserted man lying half senseless on Mrs. Clay's parlor floor.

He is thinking of that time now, and that an acknowledgment is due, and wondering how it is to be made, half a mind to be angry, rather than grateful, for the service. Such is man. All the bitterness of his lonely life rises up before him. Gray hairs are on his head, lines of age mark his face, but his heart protests against being set aside as too old for anything but dry speculation and love of abstract truth.

"I have been seeking for some proper terms in which to express to you my grateful sense of your humanity in coming to me when I was left sick and alone, but I cannot find them," he said at length, facing her.

"There is no need to say anything about it," she replied quietly, setting a careful silken stitch. "I could not have done otherwise."

Having begun, the gentleman could not stop, or would not.

"I am sure you meant well, but did you do well?" he went on. "Could you not have been content to send the doctor, without coming yourself? Did you reflect that you

were apparently incurring peril, and that for a man who had a heart as well as a head, and, worse yet, for a man whose heart had for years striven vainly to forget you? You have deprived me of the shield and support of even attempted indifference. I can no longer try to forget you, or think of you coldly, without the basest ingratitude."

Will the reader pardon Mr. Bently for expressing himself so grammatically? It was through the force of a long habit, which even passion could not break. It is true that, according to Gerald Griffin, Juno herself, when angry, spoke bad Latin; but then, Juno was a woman.

*Allons, donc.* We are ourselves interested in this conversation, and are pleased to observe that, though the speaker's moods and tenses are not flagrant, his eyes and cheeks are.

The lady glanced up swiftly with that smile, half shy, half mirthful, with which a woman who knows her power, and means to use it kindly, receives the acknowledgment of it.

"Why should you think coldly of me, or forget me?" she asked.

Mr. Bently met her glance with stern eyes. "Does a man willingly submit to slavery?" he demanded. He had not suspected Marian Willis of coquetry.

She looked down at her work again, the smile fading, but the mouth still sweet, slowly threaded her needle with a rose-pink floss, and said as slowly, "I do not wish you to forget me."

One who has seen the sun strike through a heavy fog, stop a moment, then fling it asunder, all in silence, without breath of breeze, but making a bright day of a dark one, knows how Mr. Bently's clouded face cleared at those words, and the look of her who spoke them.

No more was said then Enough

is as good as a feast, and both tasted in that moment the full sweetness of a happiness the more perfect because apparently incomplete.

On one point our mind is made up—this story shall not end with a marriage. A marriage there was, at seven o'clock one spring morning, in the little suburban church, with only three visible witnesses; and the marriage feast was—be it said with all reverence and adoration—manna from heaven, the Bread of Angels!

Mrs. Clay was, of course, shocked at this affair. Where was the *trousseau*, where the fuss, the presents that might have been, the rehearsal at a fashionable church, the organ music, the crowd of dear criticising friends, the reception, cake and wine, journey, what not—all the parade, weariness, and extravagance which have so often changed a sacrament into a ceremony? Where, indeed? They had no existence outside of the lady's disappointed wishes.

She did not even see what she called this "positively shabby affair," and we will not dwell on it. Turn we to the final scene.

Does the reader object that John bears too small a part in the story named for him? On the contrary, the whole story is because of John. You have, perhaps, seen a painting of the procession at the coronation of George IV., pages and pages of magnificent persons, names, and costumes, the brilliant pageant of the long-extended *queue*, all because of one person in it. The figure is rather large, apparently, for use in this place, but only apparently; for John's record is better than any king's, in that it is unstained.

A year has passed. In the midst of a fair area of gardens and trees stands a pleasant house. Only a window or two are open, for the spring is not yet far advanced. Un

derneath a large old pine, tree not far from the porch, a hole has been dug, and at one side of it stands Mr. Bently, spade in hand, and at the other his wife. This little pit is lined with green boughs, and the lady stoops and carefully and soberly adds one more. On the heap of earth thrown up rests a box.

This much is visible to a young man who comes strolling up the path from the gate. He pauses, and looks on in astonishment. He recollects of having heard somewhere that Cousin Bently's dog John was accidentally shot, and that Mrs. Bently cried about it. Can it be possible that they are making a funeral over John? That would be too funny.

Mr. Bently stooped, took the box in his arms, and placed it carefully down among the green boughs. Standing upright then, he wiped his eyes, and muttered a trembling, "Poor fellow!"

"Good-morning!" said a brisk voice at his elbow. "I'm sorry Johnnie met with a mishap. Are you burying him here?"

The vapid, mean, supercilious face gave them both such a shock that they reddened and frowned. No one could have been less welcome at that moment than Arthur Clay.

Mrs. Bently answered his question with a brief, "Yes."

"Oh! well, there are dogs enough in the world," said the young man, meaning to be consoling.

"There are puppies enough!" muttered Mr. Bently, and began shovelling the earth savagely into the grave.

"Please go into the house, and wait for us, Arthur," the lady said, with polite decision. She had no mind to have this last touching rite spoiled by such an intrusion.

But young Mr. Clay was in an obliging mood. "Thank you; I'd

just as lief stay, and rather. I never attended a canine funeral before."

There was a momentary silence, then Mrs. Bently spoke again, with still more decision and far less suavity: "On the whole, you must excuse us from seeing you any longer this morning. If you had gone to the door, the servant would have told you that we do not receive any one to-day."

The young man gave an angry laugh. "Oh! certainly! I wouldn't for the world intrude on your sorrow. Good-morning! It's a pity, though, that dogs are not immortal, isn't it? You might have John canonized."

Mr. Bently flashed his eyes round at the speaker. "What!" he thundered, "*you* immortal, and *my* DOG NOT!"

If they had been two Parrott guns, instead of two eyes and a mouth, Mr. Arthur Clay could not have retreated more precipitantly.

The grave was filled in and covered over with boughs, two sighs were breathed over it, then the couple walked, arm in arm, slowly toward the house.

"He was a perfect creature!" Mr. Bently said, after a silence.

"Yes!" assented the wife. "Only he would bounce at one so."

"Marian," said her husband solemnly, "if it hadn't been for John's habit of bouncing at his friends, you would have had no husband."

It was well meant, but unfortunately worded. The lady pouted, being by no means an ideal, perfect, pattern woman, but only a natural and charming one, with varying moods and whims playing, spraylike, over the deeps of principle and religion. "Don't be too sure of that!" she made answer to him.

Mr. Bently never bristled with virtues when his wife made such re-

marks. He smiled now, full of kindness. "I meant to say that I should have had no wife," he corrected himself.

At that, the pout, which was only a rebellious muscle, not a rebellious heart, disappeared. "It means the same thing, you most patient of men!" exclaimed his wife fervently.

They reached the porch, and stood there a moment, looking back to the mound under the pine-tree.

"It is a comfort to think," said the wife, "that for one year of his life we made him such a happy dog."

Then they went in, and the door closed behind them.

## A PEARL ASHORE.

If one should wish to enjoy perfectly a fugue of Bach's, this is perhaps as good a way as any: listen to it on a warm afternoon, in a Gothic Protestant church, in a quiet city street, with no one present but the organist and one's self. If any other enter, let him be velvet-footed, incurious, and sympathetic. It would be better if each listener could suppose himself to be the only listener there.

The wood-work of the church is dark, glossy, and richly carved. Rose, purple, and gold-colored panes strain the light that enters, full and glowing up in the roof, but dim below. On the walls, tinted with such colors as come to us from Eastern looms, and on the canvas of the old painters, are texts in letters of dull gold—those beautiful letters that break into bud and blossom at every turn, as though alive and rejoicing over the divine thought they bear. A sunbeam here and there, too slender to illumine widely, points its finger at a word, touches a dark cushion and brings out its shadowed crimson, or glimmers across the organ pipes, binding their silver with

gold, as though Light would say to Song, "With this ring I thee wed!"

Those clustered, silvery pipes are surrounded by a border of dark, lace-like carving, and a screen of the same hides the keyboards. Through this screen shines the lamp on the music-desk. Some one is stirring there. You lean back on the cushions, so that the body can take care of itself. Mentally, you are quiescent with a delightful sense of anticipation. If the situation should represent itself to you fancifully, you might say that your soul is somewhat dusty and weary, and has come down to this beach of silence for a refreshing bath. Knowing what you are to hear, watery images suggest themselves; for in the world of music it is the ocean that Bach gives us, as Beethoven gives us the winds, and Handel the stately-flowing streams.

We have made a Protestant church of our music-hall, because, though not the dwelling-place of God on earth, it is often the temple of religious art, and, having nothing within it to which we can prostrate ourselves in



adoration, it can yet, by signs and images, excite noble and religious feeling. Indeed, we would gladly banish to such concert-rooms all that music, however beautiful in itself, which intrudes on the exclusive recollection proper to the house of God.

This, we repeat, is as good a way as any to hear a fugue of John Sebastian Bach's. So also thought Miss Rothsay; and she was one who ought to know, for she was a professional singer, and as sensitive musically as well could be.

It was an afternoon in early September, and she had only the day before reached her native city, after a prolonged residence abroad. Hers had been that happy lot which seems to be the privilege of the artist: her work, her duty, and her delight were the same. That which she must and ought to do she would have chosen above all things as her recreation. Now, with a perfected voice, and a will to use truly and nobly that gracious power, she had returned to her native land.

Her first contact with the New World had given her a slight jar. Utility seemed to mean here something rough and harsh, and the utility of beauty to be almost unrecognized. She had as yet met with only two kinds of people: those who regarded her talent as beautiful indeed and useful, in so far as it brought her money, but otherwise superfluous; and that yet more depressing class who were enthusiastic in hailing a new amusement, a new sensation, and who valued the singer as a necessity to elegant dissipation. As yet, she had met with no serious disciple of music.

Yet, when she stepped from her door to walk about, to renew her knowledge of familiar scenes, and make acquaintance with changed

ones, she was pleased to perceive some of that tranquillity which, in her foreign life, had been so conducive to a steady growth in art. The fine streets she traversed were quiet, distant from the business world, and out of its track. The September air was golden, and the sun so warm as to make the shade welcome. Here and there, through openings between the houses, or at the ends of long avenues, were to be seen glimpses of country; and a thin haze, so exquisite that it might be the cast-off mantle of Beauty herself, half veiled, while it embellished, the landscape. It was quite in keeping to see an open church door. One who loitered on the steps explained that there was to be an organ recital, but could not say who the organist was to be.

Miss Rothsay entered, scarcely seeing her way at first, seated herself, and looked about. The atmosphere of the place suited her taste. None but noble and sacred images presented themselves. Art was there in its sublimity, and in its naïve simplicity. Here was a form full of austere beauty, there one whose grace verged on playfulness. The scene had the effect of a sacred picture, in the corner of which one can see children playing or birds on the wing.

Miss Rothsay, without knowing it, made, herself, a lovely picture in the place. Her oval, pale face was lighted by liquid gray eyes, now lifted, and drinking in the upper light. On her fair hair was set a foreign-looking black hat, turned up over the left temple with an *aigrette* and feather. A slight and elegant figure could be perceived beneath the dark-blue mantle.

Wondering a little, while she waited, who the organist might be, she ran over in her mind those she had known before going abroad. From

that, dismissing the present, her thoughts glanced over those she had known abroad, and at last rested on one she had not seen nor heard of for eight years. Eight years before, Laurie had gone to Germany to study, and he was probably there yet. She recollected his face, more youthful than his years, and full of a dreamy beauty; the figure, tall and graceful, yet wanting somewhat in manly firmness. She heard again, in fancy, that changeful voice, so low, eager, and rich-toned when he was in earnest; she met again the glance of his sparkling blue eyes, full of frankness and enthusiasm. Where was he now?

Had he been a common acquaintance, she would have inquired concerning him freely; but he was a rejected lover, and she would not, by mentioning his name, remind people of that fact. Why had she rejected him? Simply because he had seemed to her not to reach her ideal. It had occurred to her since that time that possibly his manner and not his character had been at fault. At twenty years of age, she had been more mature than he at twenty-five. She liked an appearance of dignity and firmness, and had made the mistake often made by those older and wiser than herself, of thinking that dignity of soul must always be accompanied by a grave manner, and that an air occasionally or habitually demonstrative and variable, which is merely temperament, indicates a fickle or superficial mind. Sometimes, indeed, the strongest and most profound feelings, in reserved and sensitive persons, seek to veil themselves under an affectation of lightness or caprice, and the soul looks forth with a sad scorn through that flimsy mask on the hasty and egotistical judge who pronounces sentence against it.

"And you must love him, ere to you  
He will seem worthy of your love,"

is true of some of the finest natures

Miss Rothsay, during these eight years of her separation from Laurie, had more than once felt a misgiving on his account, lest she had done him injustice. Observing and studying the manners of those she met, she saw that what passed for dignity was sometimes only the distrustfulness of the suspicious, the caution of the worldly-wise, the unsympathizing coldness of the selfish, or the vanity of the conceited. She had lost not only her admiration, but her respect for that unchangeable loftiness which chills and awes the demonstrative into silence; and she had remembered, with a growing regret, Laurie's cordial ways, that seemed to expect friendliness and sympathy from all, and to appreciate the purity of his soul, that never looked for evil, and turned away from it when it intruded itself, and thus seemed scarcely aware that evil existed. Still she had been too deeply engrossed in her studies to give him much thought, and it was only now that she became conscious of regret.

Meantime, the organist had taken his place, and was arranging his music. The light of the lamp shone on a face wherein were exquisitely blended strength and refinement. One could see there passion purified by prayer, and enthusiasm too deep for trivial excitement. The face showed, too, when studied, that tranquil reserve, not without sadness, which is learned by those who have too often cast their pearls before swine, yet who do not despair of finding sympathy.

He placed the music, sat an instant in fixed recollection, as though he prayed, then lifted his tapering hands, so nervous, light, and powerful, and let them fall on the keys.

To the listener beyond the screen, it was as though her rêverie had been broken by a burst of thunder. Then the sea rolled in its waves of sound, strong, steady, a long, overlapping rhythm. What did it mean, that fugue? Did it symbolize the swift-coming assaults of evil that seek to drag the race of man downward, as the persistent sea eats away, grain by grain, the continents? Was it, perhaps, the ceaseless endeavor of the faithful will that, baffled once, returns ever to the charge, and dies triumphantly struggling? Did it indicate the generations of men flowing on in waves for ever, to break at the feet of God; or the hurrying centuries, cut short, at last, by eternity? However it might be interpreted, the music lifted and bore the listener on, and the silence that followed found her elsewhere than the last silence had left her. She was the same in nature, but her mood was higher; for music does not change the listener, it merely intensifies what is positive in his nature, whether it be good or bad, to its superlative degree.

Vibrating and breathless still with the emotion caused by that grand composition so grandly rendered, Miss Rothsay perceived a slip of paper on the cushion, and reached her hand for it. It proved to be a programme of the Recital. She glanced along the list, and read the name of the organist at the end—it was Duncan Laurie!

She heard, as in a dream, the soft-toned Vorspiele that followed, and only came back to music when the third number, a toccata, began. But the music had now to her a new meaning. It seemed to triumph over and scorn her. She heard through that mellow thunder the voice of Nemesis.

But when the closing piece, a noble concerto by Handel, sang out,

it reproved that fancy of hers. There was no spirit of revenge nor mean triumph in Laurie's nature.

The audience, small and select, went out quietly. The organist closed the instrument, and prepared to follow, yet waited a moment to recover full consciousness of the everyday world he was going to meet. The air seemed to pulse about him still, and wings of flying melodies to brush his face. Never had he felt less inclined to meet idle compliment or talk commonplace. "I hope no one will wait for me," he muttered, going out into the vestibule.

But some one was waiting, a pale-faced, lovely woman, who looked at him, but spoke not a word. The look, too, was short; for when he exclaimed and reddened up to the eyes, and held out a trembling hand, her eyes dropped.

There is a commonplace which is but the veil to glory or delight, like Minerva in her russet gown. The conventional questions that Laurie properly asked of the lady, as they walked on together, were of this sort. When did she come home? was as one should say, When did Joy arrive? When do the stars come? And the steamer that brought her could be as worthy of poetical contemplation as the cloud that wrapped a descending Juno, or the eagle that bore away a Ganymede.

Not long after, when some one asked them who was their favorite composer, each answered "Bach!" and, when alone together, each asked the other the reason for that answer.

"Because," said the lady, blushing, "it was on the waves of one of Bach's fugues that I reached the Happy Islands."

"And because," returned the lover, "when some of Bach's music had rolled back into the ocean, it left a pearl ashore for me."

## DAYBREAK.

### ( CHAPTER I.

" O jswa. in the lotos: amen !"

A **SIDE**, slow whitening of the east, a silent stealing away of shadows, a growing radiance before which the skies receded into ineffable heights of pale blue and gleaming silver, and a March day came blowing in with locks of gold, and kindling glances, and girdle of gold, and golden sandals over the horizon.

Louis Granger, standing in the open window of his chamber, laughed as he looked in the face of the morning, and stretched out his hands and cried, "Backsheesh, O Howadji!"

Not many streets distant, another pair of eyes looked into the brightening east, but saw no gladness there. Margaret Hamilton remembered that it was her twenty-fifth birthday, and that she had cried herself to sleep the night before, thinking of it. But she would not remember former birthdays, celebrated by father, mother, and sisters, before they had died, one after one, and left her alone and aghast before the world. This, and some other memories still more recent, she put out of sight; and, since they would not stay without force, she held them out of sight. One who has to do this is haunted.

The woman looked haunted. Her eyes were unnaturally bright and alert, and shadows had settled beneath them; her cheeks were worn thin; her mouth compressed itself in closing. At twenty-five she looked thirty-five.

And yet Miss Hamilton was meant for a beauty—one of the brilliant kind, with clear gray eyes, and a creamy pallor contrasting with pro-

fuse black hair. The beautiful head was well set; something vivid and spirited in the whole air of it. Her height was only medium, but she had the carriage of a Jane de Montford, and there were not wanting those who would have described her as tall.

While she looked gloomily out, a song she had heard somewhere floated up in her mind:

"The years they come, and the years they go,  
Like winds that blow from sea to sea;  
From dark to dark they come and go,  
All in the dew-fall and the rain."

It was like a dreary bitter wind sobbing about the chimneys when the storm is rising. She turned hastily from the window, and began counting the hideous phantoms of bouquets on the cheap wall-paper, thinking that they might be the lost souls of flowers that had been wicked in life; roses that had tempted, and lilies that had lied. The room, she found, was sixteen bouquets long, and fourteen and a half wide.

When her eyes began to ache with this employment, she took up a book, and, opening it at random, read:

"A still small voice said unto me,  
'Thou art so full of misery,  
Were it not better not to be?'"

Was everything possessed to torment her? She dropped the book, and looked about in search of distraction. In the window opposite her stood her little easel with a partly finished cabinet photograph on it a man's face, with bushy whiskers, round eyes, an insignificant nose, the expression full of a weak fierceness superficially fell and determined, as though a lamb should try to look like

## Daybreak.

a lion. One eye was sharply finished; and, as Margaret glanced at the picture, this stared at her in so grotesque and threatening a manner that she burst into a nervous laugh.

"I must turn your face to the wall, Cyclops, till I can give you another eye," she said, suiting the action to the word.

A pile of unfinished photographs lay on a table near. She looked them over with an expression of weariness. "O the eyes, and noses, and mouths! Why will people so misuse the sunbeams? And this insane woman who refuses to be toned down with India ink, but will have colors to all the curls, and frizzles, and bows and ends, and countless fly-away things she has on her! She looks now more like an accident than a woman. When the colors are put in, she will be a calamity. Only one face among them pleases me—this pretty dear."

Selecting the picture of a lovely child, Margaret looked at it with admiring eyes. "So sweet! I wish I had her here this moment with her eyes, and her curls, and her mouth."

A sigh broke through the faint smile. There seemed to be a thorn under everything she touched. Laying the picture down, she busied herself in her room, opened drawers and closets and set them in order; gathered the few souvenirs yet remaining to her—letters, photographs, locks of hair—and piled them all into the grate. One folded paper she did not open, but held an instant in fingers that trembled as they clung; then, moaning faintly, threw it on to the pyre. Inside that paper were two locks of hair—both silver-threaded—twined as the two lives had been; her father's and her mother's.

The touch of a match, and the smoke of her sacrifice curled up into the morning sky.

Then again she came to a standstill, and looked about for something to do.

"I cannot work," she said. "My hand is not steady enough, and my eyes are dim. What was it that Beethoven wrote to his friend? 'At times cheerful, then again sorrowful; waiting to see if fate will listen to us.' Suppose I should drop everything, since I am so nerveless, and wait to see what fate will do."

Here again the enemy stood. The picture of waiting that came up before her mind was that of Judge Pyncheon in the *House of the Seven Gables*, sitting and staring blankly as the hours went by—a sight to shriek out at when at length he was found. With a swift pencil this woman's imagination painted a companion picture: the door of her room opening after days of silence; a curious, frightened face looking in; somebody sitting there cold and patient, with half-open eyes, and not a word of welcome or questioning for the intruder.

A clock outside struck ten. Margaret rose languidly and dressed for a walk, after pausing to rest. Raising her arms to arrange her hair and bonnet, she felt so faint that for a moment she was obliged to lean forward on her dressing-table.

At length she was ready, only one duty left unperformed. Miss Hamilton had not said her prayers that morning, and had not even thought of saying them, or of reproaching herself for the omission—a scandalous omission, truly, for the granddaughter of the Rev. Doctor John Hamilton, and daughter of that excellent but somewhat diluted deacon, John Hamilton, his son. But to pray was to remember; and beside, God had forgotten her she thought.

Miss Hamilton was not a Catholic. To her, Christ died eighteen centuries

ago, and went to heaven, and stayed there, only looking and listening down in some vague and far-away manner that was easier to doubt than to believe. The church into which, at every dawn of day, the Beloved descends with shining pierced feet and hands; with the lips that spoke, and the eyes that saw, and the locks through which had sifted the winds of Olivet and the dews of Gethsemane; with the heart of infinite love and pity, yes, and the soul of infinite power—this church she knew not. To her it was an abomination. The temples where pain hangs crowned with a dolorous majesty, and where the path of sorrows is also the path of delights, her footsteps had never sought. To her they were temples of idolatry. Therefore, when troubles came upon her, though she faced them intrepidly, it was only with a human courage. What wonder if at last it proved that pain was stronger than she?

With her hand on the latch of the door she paused, then turned back into her chamber again. The society face she had assumed dropped off; a sigh went shivering over her lips, and with it a half-articulated thought, silly and womanish, "If I had some one to come in here, put an arm around me—I'm so tired!—and say, 'Take courage, dear!' I could bear up yet longer. I could endure to the end, perhaps."

A silly thought, but pitiful, being so vain.

Miss Hamilton was not by nature one of those who, as Sir Thomas Browne says, looked askint upon the face of truth. But she had not dared to fully realize her circumstances, lest all courage should die out of her heart. Now you could see that she put aside the last self-delusion, and boldly looked her life in the face. It was *McCluskey*.

One of the bravest of soldiers has said that in his first battle he would have been a coward if he had dared. Imagine the eyes of such a fighter, a foe within and a foe without, and but his own right arm and dauntless will between the two!

Such eyes had this woman. Of her whole form, only those eyes seemed to live. But for them she might have been Margaret Hamilton's statue.

At length she moved; and going slowly out, held on to the railing in descending the stairs. Out doors, and down Washington street, then, taking that direction involuntarily. It was near noon when she found herself in a crowd on Park street, hastening through it, without caring to inquire what the cause of the gathering was. Coming out presently in front of the state house, and seeing that there was space yet on the steps, she went up them, and took her stand near a gentleman whom she had long known by sight and repute. Mr. Louis Granger also recognized her, and made room, quietly placing himself between her and the crowd. Miss Hamilton scarcely noticed the movement. She was used to being attended to.

This gentleman was what might be called fine-looking, and was thoroughly gentlemanly in appearance. He was cast in a large mould, both form and features, had careless hazel eyes that saw everything, and rather a lounging way with him. Indeed, he owned himself a little lazy, and used laughingly to assert his belief that inertia is a property of mind as well as of matter. It took a good deal to start him; but once started, it took still more to stop him. His age might be anywhere from thirty to forty, the few silver threads in his fine dark hair counting for nothing. You perceived that they had no business

whatever there. He was not a man who would catch the eye in a crowd; but, once your attention was directed toward him, you felt attracted. The charm of his face depended chiefly on expression; and those who pleased him called Mr. Granger beautiful.

He stood now looking attentively at the lady beside him, finding himself interested in her. Her eyes, that were fixed on the advancing procession, appeared to see no more than if they had been jewels, and her mouth was shut as if it would never open again. The pale temples were hollow, the delicate nostrils were slightly pinched, the teeth seemed to be set hard. He studied her keenly, secure in her perfect abstraction, and marked even the frail hand that clinched, not clasped, the iron railing. Mr. Granger could read as much in a hand as Washington could; and this hand, dazzlingly fair, full-veined, pink-palmed, transparent, dewy, with heart-shaped finger-tips that looked as though some finer perception were reaching out through the flesh, was to him an epitome of the woman's character.

It was the 17th of March, and the procession in honor of St. Patrick an unusually fine one. It flowed past like a river of color and music, with many a silken rustling of the flag of their adoption, but everywhere and above all the beautiful green and gold of that most beautiful banner in the world—a banner which speaks not of dominion, but of song and sunshine and the green earth. While other nations, higher-headed, had taken the sun, the star, the crescent, the eagle, or the lion for an emblem, or, with truer loftiness, had raised the cross as their ensign, this people, with a sweetness and humility all the more touching that it was unconscious, bent to search in the grasses, and smilingly and trustfully held up a

shamrock as their symbol. Those had no need to inscribe the cross upon their escutcheon who, in the face of the world, bore it in their faithful hearts, and upon their bowed and lacerated shoulders.

A pathetic spectacle—a countless procession of exiles; yet, happily for them, the generous land that gave them a home grew no dark willows to rust their harp-strings.

The music was, of course, chiefly Irish airs; but one band in passing struck up "Sweet Home."

Margaret started at the sound, and looked about for escape. She could not listen to that. Happening to glance upward, she saw a company of ladies and gentlemen in the balcony over the portico. Governor A—— was there, leaning on the railing and looking over. He caught her glance, and beckoned. Margaret immediately obeyed the summons, getting herself in hand all the way, and came out on the balcony with another face than that she had worn below. She had put on a smile; some good fairy had added a faint blush, and Miss Hamilton was presentable. The governor met her with a hearty smile and clasp of the hand. "I am glad to see you," he said. "Will you stand here, or take that seat Mr. Sinclair is offering you?"

"Yes, sir," he exclaimed, as Margaret turned away, continuing his conversation with a gentleman beside him, "the English treatment of the Irish is a clear case of cussedness."

"Our good chief magistrate is slightly idiomatic at times," remarked a lady near by.

A poetess stood in the midst of a group of gentlemen, who looked at her, while she looked at the procession. "It is Arethusa, that bright stream," she said with soft eagerness. "Pursued and threatened at home, it

has crept through shadowy ways, and leaped to light in a new land."

Margaret approached Mr. Sinclair, who sat apart, and who made room for her beside him.

Even now she noticed the splendid beauty of this man in whom every physical attraction was perfected. Mr. Maurice Sinclair might have posed for a Jupiter; but an artist would scarcely have taken him for a model of the prince of the apostles. He was superbly made, with a haughty, self-conscious beauty; his full, bold eyes were of a light neutral tint impossible to describe, so transparent were they, so dazzling their lustre; and his face was delicately smooth and nobly-featured. One could scarcely regret that the long moustache curling away from his mouth, then drooping below his chin, and the thick hair pushed back from his forehead, were of silvery whiteness. It did not seem to be decay, but perfection. Mr. Sinclair used to say that his head had blossomed.

He smiled as Miss Hamilton stepped slowly toward him, the smile of a man entirely pleased with himself.

"Own now," he said, "that you are wishing to be Irish for the nonce, that you might feel the full effervescence of the occasion."

She shook her head listlessly.

Mr. Sinclair perceived that she needed to be amused. "See the governor wave his handkerchief!" he said. "That man has been born twice, once into Massachusetts, and the second time into all creation."

She glanced at the object of his remarks, noting anew his short, rotund figure, his round head with all its crow's-nest of black ringlets, his prompt, earnest face that could be so kind. "There isn't a drop of mean blood in his veins," she said. "He is one of those rare men in whom

feeling and principle go hand in hand."

Mr. Sinclair gave his shoulders a just perceptible shrug. "Do you know all the people here?" he asked, observing that Margaret looked searchingly over the company. Let me play Helen on the walls of Troy, and point out the notables whom you do not know. That antique-cameo-faced gentleman whom you are looking at now is the Rev. Mr. Southard. He is misnamed of course. He should be called after something boreal. Does not he make you shiver? He lives with my cousin, whom I saw you standing beside down there. Lou's likes him, or pretends to. Mr. Southard is not so much a modern minister, as a theological reminiscence. He belongs among the crop-heads; I have somewhere heard that he was a wild lad, and is now doing penance. It is likely. One doesn't bar a sheep-fold as one does a prison. He appears to be a little off guard now, for a breath seems to have forgotten predestination. When he looks like that, I am always reminded of something pagan. He'd be horrified, of course, if he knew it. Mark that Olympian look of painless melancholy, and the blue, motionless eye. What a cold, marble face he has! Being too polished to retain heat, he remains unmoved in the midst of enthusiasm. That's philosophy, isn't it? He is one of those who fancy that ceasing to be human, they become superhuman. They mistake the prefix, that's all. But Mr. Southard bristles with virtues. I must own that I never knew a man so forgiving toward other people's enemies."

"I know Mr. Southard well by reputation," Margaret interrupted rather warmly. "He is human, of course, and so, fallible; but every mountain in his soul is a Sinai!"

"Oh! he has his good points," Mr. Sinclair admitted tranquilly. "I have



known him to be surprised into a glorious laugh, for which, to be sure, he probably beat himself afterward; and he has a temper that peeps out now and then in a delightfully human fashion. I have detected in him, too, a carnal weakness for French chocolate, and a taste for pictures, even the pictures of the Babylonians. Once I saw him stand five minutes before a faded old painting of Cimabue's; I believe it was a virgin standing between two little boys who leaned to kiss each other, a hand of hers on either head. I don't condemn the man *in toto*. I like his faults; but I detest his virtues!

"That stout, consequential person with his chin in his cravat, who as Suckling says of Sir Toby Mathews, is always whispering nothing into somebody's ear, is Mr. ex-councilman Smith. He was thrown to the surface at the time of the Know-Nothing ebullition, and when that was over, was skinned off with the rest of 'em. He considers himself a statesman, and looks forward with prophetic goggle eyes to the time when his party shall be again in the ascendant. He comes here to nurse his wrath, and I haven't a doubt that he feels as though this procession were marching down his throat. He used to be a joiner, then a house-builder, then he got to be a house-owner. Twenty years ago, my aunt Betsey, who lives in the country, paid him two dollars to build a trellis for her grape-vine, and he did it so well that she gave him his dinner after the family had got through. Now he has a mansion near hers that dwarfs her cottage to a bird-cage. His place is really fine, grounds worth looking at, and a stone house with bronze lions at the door. I don't know what he has lions there for, unless to indicate that Snug the joiner lives within. I'm not afraid of 'em. You've never

heard of him here; but out there he is tremendous. '*Imposteur à la Mecque, et prophète à Médine.*'

"Still there are people even here who blow about him. Psaphon's birds, of course, fed on Smith's oats. He hates me because he thinks that I laugh at him; but I don't doubt that it soothes his soul to know that the roses on his carpets are twice as large as those on mine, and that he has ten pictures to my one. The first thing you see when the vestibule door opens is a row of portraits, ten of 'em, Smith and his wife, and eight children. Ames painted 'em, and he must have had the nightmare regularly till they were done. They are larger than life, and their eyes move. I am positive that they move. I guess there are little strings behind the canvas. There they hang and stare at you, till you wish they were hanged by the necks. The first time I went there, I shook my fist at 'em behind Smith's back, and he caught me at it. I couldn't help it. The spectacle is enough to excite any man's worst feelings. The parlor walls are covered with landscapes painted from a cow's point of view, strong in grass and clover, with pleasant drinking-places, and large trees to stand under when the sun gets high. I never see such trees and water in nature, but I dare say the cows do. My wife and I dined there once. The eight children sat in two detachments and ate Black Hamburg grapes, skins and all; and the peaches were brought in polished like apples. My wife got into such a giggle that she nearly strangled. I see, you sharp-eyed Bedouin, you want to remind me that I have eaten of this man's salt. True, but he made it as bitter as any that Dante ever tasted.

"That sober, middle-aged man in a complete suit of pepper and salt,

hair and all, is Mr. Ames, the member from N——, Polliwog Ames they call him, from his great speech. Is it possible you have never heard of it? It was the speech of the session. Some one had introduced a bill asking an appropriation of ten thousand dollars toward building a new museum of natural history. There was a little palaver on the subject, then Ames got up. All winter nothing had been heard from him but the scriptural yea and nay; so, of course, every one was attentive, 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'while thousands of men, women, and children, in the city, and tens of thousands in the commonwealth, are hungry to-day, and will be hungry to-morrow, and are and will be too poor to buy food; while paupers are crowding our almshouses, and beggars are swarming in our streets; while all this poverty is staring us in the face, and putting to us the problem, how are we to be fed and clothed and sheltered, and kept from crime, and taught to read and to pray? it would seem to me, gentlemen, an unnecessary not to say reprehensible act, to appropriate ten thousand dollars of the public money, in order that some long-nosed professor might be enabled to show us how polliwogs wiggle their tails.' Having said this, Mr. Ames shut his mouth, and sat down covered with glory."

Margaret's only comment was to look earnestly at this man who had remembered the poor.

They were silent a little while; then Mr. Sinclair spoke again, in a lower voice. "I am going to Europe in a few weeks."

She had nothing to say to this. His going would make no difference with her.

"You know, and everybody knows," he went on hastily, "that my wife and I have not for years lived very hap-

pily together. I think that few blame me. I would not wish all the blame to be thrown on her, either. The fact is, we never were suited to each other, and every day we grew more antagonistic. We had a little sensible talk last week, and finally agreed to separate. She will remain here, and I, as I said, shall go to Europe for an indefinite time, perhaps for ever."

At any other time Margaret might have felt herself embarrassed by such a confidence. As it was, she hardly knew what reply to make; but, since he waited, managed to say that if people could not live peacefully together, she supposed it was best they should separate.

He spoke again abruptly.

"Margaret, you cannot, if you would, hide your misery from me. You are fitted to appreciate all that is beautiful in nature and art, yet are bound and cramped by the necessity of constant labor for your daily bread. You suffer, too, what to the refined is the worst sting of poverty, the being associated with, often in the power of, vulgar and ill-natured people, who despise you because you are not rich, and hate you because, being poor, you yet will not and cannot be like themselves. I know that there are those who take delight in mortifying you, in misinterpreting your every act and word, and in prejudicing against you persons who otherwise might be your friends. What a wretched, double life you live; petted by notable people on one hand, and insulted by inferiors on the other! How long is it to last? You must be aware that you are slipping out of the notice of your early friends. You cannot accept their invitations, because you have not time, and moreover, are not suitably dressed. By and by they will cease to invite you. Do you look forward to marriage? Every day your chances are lessening.

You are growing old before your time. I cannot see that you have anything to look forward to but a life of ill-paid toil, a gradual dropping out of the place that you were born and educated to fill, a loss of courage and self-respect, a lowering of the tastes, and at last, a sinking to the level of what you must despise. If you should be taken ill now, what would become of you?"

"I should probably go to the charity-ward of the public hospital," Miss Hamilton replied coldly.

"What do you hope for?" he asked.

"I hope for nothing," she answered. "I know all that you tell me, and far more."

Mr. Sinclair's eyes brightened. "What good are your fine friends to you? You would never ask them to help you, I know; but if you could bring yourself to that, would you not feel a bitter difference? It is not mean to shrink from asking favors, when they are for ourselves. Walter Savage Landor was neither mean nor a fool; yet he makes one of his best characters say that the highest price we can pay for a favor is to ask for it, and everybody who has tried knows that. You would sink at once from a friend to a dependent. Now your friends ask no questions, and you tell them no lies. If they give the subject a thought, they fancy you in some quiet, retired, and highly genteel apartment, if rather near the eaves, then so for a pure northern light, leisurely and elegantly painting photographs, for which you receive the highest prices, and thanks to boot. They don't see an upstart assistant criticising your work, or a stingy employer taking off part of the price for some imaginary flaw. And if they did, they would only tell you that such annoyances are trivial, that you must rise above them. I've heard that kind of talk. But those who go down to bat-

tle with the pigmies know how tormenting their bites are. The worst of it is, too, that you cannot long maintain the dignity and purity of your own character in this petty strife. It isn't in the nature of things, I don't care what may be said to the contrary by parlor ascetics and philosophers. They have no right to dogmatize on the necessary influence of circumstances in which they have never been placed. Moreover, constant labor is lowering to the mind, and any work is degrading to the person who can do a higher kind of work. It may be saving to him whose leisure would be employed in frivolity and license; but that person is already base. The time you spend in studying how to make one dollar do the work of five makes a lower being of you. I can see this in you, Margaret. Your manners and conversation are not what they were. You have no time to read, or think, or look at pictures, or hear lectures, or listen to music—none. You have only time for work, and, the work finished, are too weary for anything but sleep; perhaps too weary for that even. How long do you expect to keep up with such a life dragging at you?"

Miss Hamilton lifted between her finger and thumb a fold of the dress she wore. "All the time I could spare from my painting in the last three weeks has been devoted to the task of making this dress out of an old one," she said. "It was a difficult problem; but I solved it. I was always fond of the mathematics. Of course, during those three weeks my universe revolved around a black bombazine centre. O sir! I know better than you can tell me, how degrading such labor is. God in the beginning imposed it as a curse; and a curse it is!"

There was again a momentary pause, during which Mr. Sinclair's merciless eyes searched the cold face

beside him. Margaret did not observe that all the company had gone, that the procession had disappeared, the crowd melted away. She had sat there and listened like one in a dream, too dull and weary to be angry, or to wonder that such words should be addressed to her, and such bold assertions made, where her most intimate friends had never ventured a hint even.

When Mr. Sinclair spoke again, his voice was soft and earnest. "Have you any friend so dear and trusty, that his frown would make your heart ache yet more? In all the world, do you know one to whom your actions are of moment, who thinks of you anxiously and tenderly, for whose sake you would walk in a straight path, though it might be full of thorns? Is there one?"

"There is not one," she said.

"Come with me, then!" he exclaimed. "Think of Italy, and what that name means, of the east, of all the lands that live in song and in story. Drop for ever from your hands the necessity for toil, and let your heart and mind take holiday. 'Not one,' you said; but, Maud, you mistook, I thought of you all the time, and got your troubles by heart. Leave this miserable, cramping life of yours, and come with me where we shall be as free from criticism as if we were disembodied spirits. Forget this paltry Boston, with its wriggling streets and narrow breaths. Fancy now that the breeze in our faces blows off the blue Mediterranean, the little dome above us rises and swells to St. Peter's, that last flutter of a banner over the hill is the argent ground with golden keys. Or Victor Immanuel has got Rome for his own, and there floats the red, white, and green of Italy. How you would color and brighten like a rose under such sunshine! Come with me, Margaret, come!"

She looked at him with troubled, uncomprehending eyes, groping for the meaning under the flowery speech. His glance dazzled her.

"It is like a fairy-tale," she said. "How can it come true? I am poor, yet you bid me travel as only the rich can. How am I to go with you? who else is going?"

He smiled. "O silly Margaret! since there is no other way, and since in all the world there is no one to care for or to question you, come with me alone."

Then Margaret Hamilton knew that her cup of bitterness had lacked one poisoned drop. She got up from the seat, shrinking away, feeling as though she lessened physically.

But when she reached the door, Mr. Sinclair was there before her.

"At least, forgive me!" she heard him say.

"Let me go!" she exclaimed, without looking up.

"Remember my tenderness and pity for you," he urged.

"You have none!" she said. "Let me go."

"And you are not indifferent to me," he continued.

She lifted her face at that, and looked at him with eyes that were bright, gray, and angry as an eagle's.

"Maurice Sinclair," she said haughtily, "I thank you for one thing. Weary, and miserable, and lonely as I have been, I could not have been certain, without this test, that such a temptation would not make me hesitate. But now I know that temptation comes from within, not from without, and that infamy attracts only the infamous. I care for you, you think? My admiration and my friendships are free; but I am not a woman to tear my hands on other people's hedges. Let me tell you, sir, that I must honor a man before I can feel any affection for him. I must

know that, though being human he might stumble, his proper stature is upright. If I cared for you, I could not stand here and scorn you, as I do; I should pray you to be true to your noble self, to give me back my trust in you. I should forgive you; but my forgiveness would be coals of fire on your head. If I could love a man well enough to sin for him, I should love him too well for that. Oh! it was manly, and tender, and generous of you, was it not? I had lost all but self-respect, and you would have taken that from me. But, sir, I have wings which you can never entangle!"

"You have nowhere to turn," he said.

She stood one instant as though his words were indeed true, then threw her hands upward, "I turn to God! I turn to God!" she cried out.

When she looked at him again, Mr. Sinclair stepped aside and let her pass.

But the strength that passion gives is brief, and when Margaret reached the street, she was trembling with weakness. Where to go? Not home; oh! not to that gloomy place! She walked across the Common, and thence to the Public Gardens, every step a weariness.

"I must stay out in the sunshine," she thought, taking a seat under the great linden-tree that stands open to the west. "Darkness, and chilly, shadowed places are terrible. Oh! what next?"

Though she had called on God, she yet believed not in him, poor Margaret! Hers had been the instinctive outcry of one driven to desperation; and when the impulse subsided, then darkness fell again.

Sitting there, she drew from her pocket a little folded paper, opened it in an absent way, and dreamily examined the delicate white powder it contained. More than once, when

life had pressed too heavily, the enchanter hidden under this delusive form had come to her aid, had loosened the tense cords that bound her forehead, unclasping them with a touch as light and tender as love's own, had charmed away the pain from flesh and spirit. She recollected now anew its sinuous and subtle ways. First, a deep and gradually settling quietude of mind and body, all disturbing influences stealing away so noiselessly that their going was imperceptible, a prickling in the arms, a languor in the throat and at the roots of the tongue, a sweet fainting of the breath, an entire and perfect peace. Then a slowly rising perception of pleasures already in possession yet unnoticed before.

How delightful the mere involuntary act of breathing! How airily intoxicating the full, soft rush of blood through the arteries, swinging noisily like a dance to a song, never lost, in whatever labyrinthine windings it might wander. How the universe opened like a folded bud, like myriad buds that bloom in light and color and perfume! The air and the sunshine became miracles; common things slipped off their disguise, and revealed undreamed-of glories. All this in silence. And presently the silence would be found rhythmic like a tune.

She went no farther. The point at which all these downy influences became twined into a cord as potent as the fabulous Gleipnir, and tightened about both body and soul with its soft, implacable coils—that her thought glanced away from.

She carefully shook the shining powder into a little heap in the paper. There was ten times as much as she had ever taken at once; but then she had ten times greater need of rest and forgetfulness. Her head felt giddy, as if a wheel were going with-

in it. Catching at that thought of a wheel, her confused memory called up strange eastern scenes, a temple in a gorge among rocky mountains; outside, the dash of a torrent foaming over its rough bed between the palms; not far away, the jungle, where the tiger springs with a golden flash through the shadows; within, hideous carved idols with vestments of cloth of gold, and silver bowls set before them, the noiseless entering of a gliding lama, the bowed form and hand outstretched to twirl the praying-wheel, whereon is wound in million-fold repetition the one desire of his soul, "*Um mani panee, houn!*" O jewel in the lotos! Rest and forgetfulness! So her thought kept murmuring with weary persistency.

As she raised the morphine to her lips, some one touched her arm.

"Madam!" said a man's voice just behind her shoulder.

She started and half turned. "Well, sir!"

"What have you there?" he asked, without removing his hand.

She shook herself loose from him.

"Will you go on, sir? you are insolent!"

"I cannot go while you have such a face, and while that paper is in your hand," Louis Granger said firmly; and reaching, took the morphine from her.

Her glance slid away from his face, and became fixed.

"O child! what would you do?" he exclaimed.

She did not appear to hear him. She was swaying in her seat, and her breath came sobbingly.

Mr. Granger called a carriage that was passing, and led her to it. She made no resistance, and did not object, scarcely noticed, indeed, when he seated himself opposite her.

"Walk your horses till I find out where the lady wants to go," he said to the driver.

When, after a few minutes of sickening half-consciousness, Margaret began to realize who and where she was, and looked at Mr. Granger, she met his eyes full of tears.

"I have no claim on your confidence," he said, "but I desire to serve you; and if you can trust me, I assure you that you will never have reason to regret it."

Margaret dropped her face into her hands, and all the pride died out of her heart.

"I was starving," she said. "I have not tasted food for twenty-four hours; and for a week I have eaten nothing but dry bread."

Mr. Granger leaned quickly and took her hand in a strong grasp, as we take the hands of the dying, to give them strength to die.

"I worked day and night," she sobbed; "and I only got enough to make me decent, and pay for my room. I have done all I could; but I was losing the strength to do. I have been starving so for more than a year, growing worse every day. I wasn't responsible for trying to take the morphine. My head is so light and my heart is so heavy, that everything seems strange, and I don't quite know what is right and what is wrong."

Mr. Granger's sympathy was painfully excited. He was not only shocked and hurt for this woman, but he felt that in some way he was to blame when such things could be. He had also that uneasiness which we all experience when reminded how deceitful is the fair surface of life, and what tragedies may be going on about us, under our very eyes, yet unseen and unsuspected by us. "What if my own little girl should come to this!" he thought.

"What was Mr. Sinclair saying to you up there?" he asked abruptly.

She told him without hesitation.

"The villain!" he muttered.

"No," Margaret replied sadly, "I think that according to his light, he had some kind meaning. You know he doesn't believe in any religion, that he denies revelation; yet you would not call him a villain for that. Why then is he a villain for denying a moral code that is founded on revelation? He is consistent. If God and my own instincts had not forbidden me to accept his proposal, nothing else would have had power."

She sighed wearily, and leaned against the back of the carriage.

"Promise to trust all to me now," Mr. Granger said hastily, "I am not a Maurice Sinclair."

"Have I not trusted you?" she asked with trembling lips. "Besides, it seems that God has sent you to me, and trusting you is trusting him. I didn't expect him to answer me; but I called, and he has answered."

## CHAPTER II.

### A LOUIS D'OR.

With the exception of that perfect domestic circle not often beheld save in visions, there is perhaps no more delightful social existence than may be enjoyed where a few congenial persons are gathered under one roof, in all the freedom of private life, but without its cares, where no one is obliged to entertain or be entertained, but is at liberty to be spontaneously charming or disagreeable, according to his mood, where comfort is taken thought of, and elegance is not forgotten.

Into such an establishment Mr. Granger's home had expanded after the death of his wife. It could not be called a boarding-house, since he admitted only a few near friends; and he refused to consider himself as host. The only visible authorities in the

place were Mrs. James, the house-keeper, whose weapon was a duster, and Miss Dora Granger, whose sceptre was a blossom.

The house was a large, old-fashioned one, standing with plentiful elbow-room in a highly respectable street that had once been very grand, and there were windows on four sides. All these windows looked like pleasant eyes with spectacles over them. There was a rim of green about the place, a tall horse-chestnut-tree each side of the street, door, and an irrepressible grape-vine that, having been planted at the rear of the house, was now well on its way to the front. This vine was unpruned, an embodied mirth, flinging itself in every direction, making the slightest thing it could catch at an excuse for the most profuse luxuriance, so happy it could never stop growing, so full of life it could not grow old.

In the days when Mr. Granger's grandfather built this mansion, walls were not raised with an eye chiefly to the accommodation of Pyramus and Thisbe. They grew slowly and solidly, of honest stone, brick, and mortar. They had timbers, not splinters; there wasn't an inch of veneering from attic to basement; and instead of stucco, they had woodwork with flutings as fine as those of a lady's ruffle. When you see mahogany-colored doors in one of those dwellings, you may be pretty sure that the doors are mahogany; and the white knobs and hinges do not wear red. Cannon-balls fired at these houses stick in the outer wall.

Such was Mr. Louis Granger's home. Miss Hamilton had looked at that house many a time, and sighingly contrasted it with the dingy brick declivity in which she had her eyrie. Now she was to live here.

"How wishes do sometimes come fulfilled, if we only wish long enough!" she thought, as the carriage in which she had come drew up before the steps.

Mr. Granger stood in the open door, and there was a glimpse of the housekeeper behind him, looking out with the utmost respect on the equipage of their visitor—for one of Miss Hamilton's wealthy friends had offered her a carriage.

But as the step was let down, and the liveried footman stood bowing before her, Margaret shrank back with a sudden recollection that was unspeakably bitter and humiliating. In spite of the mocking show, she was coming to this house as a beggar, literally asking for bread. On the impulse of the moment, she could have turned back to her attic and starvation rather than accept friendship on such terms. In that instant all the petty spokes and wheels in the engine of her poverty combined themselves for one wrench more.

"I have been watching for you," said Mr. Granger's voice at the carriage-door.

Margaret gave him her hand, and stepped out on to the pavement, her face downcast and deeply blushing.

"I hope I have not incommoded you," she said coldly.

He made no reply, and seemed not to have heard her ungracious comment; but when they reached the threshold, he paused there, and said earnestly, "I bid you welcome to your new home. May it be to you a happy one!"

She looked up gratefully, ashamed of her bitterness.

Mr. Granger's manner was joyful and cordial, as if he were receiving an old friend, or meeting some great good fortune. Bidding the housekeeper wait, he conducted Margaret to a room near by, and seated her there to hear one word more before he should go to his business and leave her to the tender mercies of his servants. As she sat, he stood before her, and leaning on the high back of a chair, looked

smilingly down into the expectant and somewhat anxious face that looked up at him.

"I am so cruel as to rejoice over every circumstance which has been influential in adding to my household so welcome and valuable a friend," he said. "I have worlds for you to do. First, my little Dora is in need of your care. It is time she should begin to learn something. I have also consented, subject to your approval, to associate with her two little girls of her age, who live near, and will come here for their lessons. Besides this, a friend of mine, who is preparing a scientific work, and who does not understand French, wishes you to make some translations for him. Does this suit you?"

"Perfectly!"

"But first you must rest," he said. "And now I will leave you to get acquainted with the house under Mrs. James's auspices. Do not forget that your comfort and happiness are to be considered, that you are to ask for whatever you may want, and mention whatever may be not to your liking. Have you anything to say to me now?" pausing with his hand on the door-knob.

"Yes," she replied, smiling, to hide emotion; "as in the Koran God said of St. John, so I of you, 'May he be blessed the day whereon he was born, the day whereon he shall die, and the day whereon he shall be raised to life!'"

He took her hand in a friendly clasp, then opened the door, and with a gesture that included the whole house, said, "You are at home!"

Margaret glanced after him as he went out, and thought, "At home! The French say it better: I am *chez vous*!"

"You have to go up two flights, Miss Hamilton," the housekeeper began apologetically, with the footman



still in her eye. "But Mr. Granger said that you want a good deal of light. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis occupy that front room over the parlor, and the next one is the spare-chamber, and that one under yours is Mr. Granger's, and that little one is Dora's, and the long one back in the L is Mr. Southard's. Up this other flight, Miss Aurelia Lewis has the front chamber. She likes it because the horse-chestnut tree comes up against the window. In summer you can hardly see through. It's like being in the woods. There, this is your chamber," flinging open the door of a large, airy room that had two deep windows looking over the house-tops straight into the eyes of the east. The coloring of this room was delightfully fresh and cool, the walls a pale olive-green, the wood-work white, and the wide mantel-piece of green marble. There were snow-white muslin curtains, Indian matting on the floor, and the chairs were all wicker, except one, a crimson-cushioned arm-chair. The old-fashioned bureau and wardrobe were of solid mahogany adorned with glittering brass knobs and handles, and the black and gilt framed looking-glass had brass candle-sockets at each side. The open grate was filled with savin-boughs, and a bright shell set in the midst. In the centre of the mantle-piece was a white vase running over full of glistening smilax sprays, and at each end stood a brass candlestick with a green wax candle in it. There were three pictures on the three blank walls; one a water-color of moss-roses and buds dew sprinkled, the second, a chromo of a yellow-gray cat stretched out in an attitude of slumbrous repose, her tail coiled about her lithe haunches, her head advanced and resting on her paws, her eyes half shut, but showing a sly line of watchful golden lustre. The third was a very good engraving of the Sistine Madonna. A large

closet with drawers and shelves, delightful to feminine eyes, led back from this quaint and pleasant chamber.

Margaret glanced around her pretty nest, then flung off her bonnet and shawl, and, seating herself in the arm-chair by the window, for the first time really looked at the housekeeper. Till that moment she had not been conscious of the woman.

Mrs. James was hospitably making herself busy doing nothing, moving chairs that were already well placed, and wiping off imaginary specks of dust. She looked as though she would be an excellent housekeeper, and put her whole soul in the business; but appeared to be neutral otherwise.

"Everything here was as clean as your eye this morning," she said, frowning anxiously as she stooped to bring a suspected table-top between her vision and the light.

"Everything is exquisite," Miss Hamilton replied. "One can't help having a speck of dust now and then. The earth is made of it, you know."

The housekeeper sighed wofully. "Yes, there's a great deal of dirt in the world."

When she was left alone, Margaret still sat there, letting the room get acquainted with her, and settling herself into a new and delicious content. Happening after a while to glance toward the door, she saw it slowly and noiselessly moving an inch or two, stopping, then again opening a little way. She continued to look, wondering what singular current of air or eccentricity of hinge produced that intermittent motion. Presently she spied, clasped around the edge of the door, at about two feet from the carpet, four infinitesimal fingertips, rosy-white against the yellow-white of the paint. Miss Hamilton checked the breath a little on her smiling lips, and awaited further revelations.

After a moment, there appeared just above the fingers a half-curved, flossy lock of pale gold-colored hair, and softly dawning after that aurora, a beautiful child's face.

"Oh! come to me!" exclaimed Margaret.

Immediately the face disappeared, and there was silence.

Miss Hamilton leaned back in her chair again, and began to recollect the tactics for such cases made and provided by the great law-giver Nature. She affected not to be aware that the silken locks reappeared, and after them a glimpse of a low, milk-white forehead, then a blue, bright eye, and finally, the whole exquisite little form in a gala-dress of white, with a gay sash and shoulder-knots.

Dora came in looking intently at the mantel-piece, and elaborately unconscious that there was any one present but herself. Miss Hamilton's attention was entirely absorbed by the outer world.

"I never did see such a lovely flower as there is in that window," she soliloquized. "It is as pink as ever it can be. Indeed, I think it is a little pinker than it can conveniently be. It must have to try hard."

Dora glanced toward the stranger, and listened attentively.

"And I see three tiny clouds scudding down the east. I shouldn't be surprised if their mother didn't know they are out. They run as if they didn't mean to stop till they get into the middle of next week."

Dora took a step or two nearer, looked warily at the speaker, and peeped out the window in search of the truant cloudlets.

"And there is another cloud overhead that has gone sound asleep," Miss Hamilton pursued as tranquilly as if she had been sitting there and talking time out of mind. "One side of it is as white as it can be, and

the other side is so much whiter than it can be, that it makes the white side look dark. If anybody wants to see it, she had better make haste."

"Anybody," was by this time close to the window, looking out with all her eyes, her hand timidly, half unconsciously touching the lady's dress.

"Oh! what a splendid bird!" cried the enchantress. "What a pity it should fly away! But it may come back again pretty soon."

Silence, and the pressure of a dimpled elbow on Margaret's knee.

"I suppose you don't care much about sitting in my lap, so as to see better," was the next remark, addressed, apparently, to all out-doors.

The child began shyly to climb to the lady's knee, and was presently assisted there.

"Such a bird!" sighed Margaret then, looking at the little one, thinking that by this time her glance could be borne. "It had yellow specks on its breast," illustrating with profuse and animated gestures, "and a long bill, and a glossy head with yellow feathers standing up on top, and yellow stripes on its wings," pointing toward her own shoulders, her glance following her finger. Then a break, and an exclamation of dismay, "What has become of my wings?"

Dora reached up to look over the lady's shoulder, but saw only the back of a well-fitting bombazine gown.

"I guess they's flied away," said the child in the voice of an anguid bobolink.

"Then I'll tell you a story," said Margaret. "Once there was a lady who lived in a real mean place, and she didn't have a good time at all. She was just as lonesome and homesick as she could be. One day she brought home the photograph of a dear little girl, and that she liked. And she wished that she could see the real little girl, and that she could

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talk to her; but she had only the paper picture. Well, by-and-by she went to live in a delightful house; and while she sat in her chamber, the door opened, and who should come in but the same dear child whose picture she had loved! Wasn't the lady glad then?"

"Who was the little girl?" asked Dora, with a shy, conscious look and smile.

The answer was a shower of kisses all over her sweet face, and two tears that dropped unseen into her sunny hair.

### CHAPTER III.

#### CHEZ LUI.

MISS HAMILTON did not go down to dinner the first day; but when she heard Mr. Granger come in, sent a line to him, excusing herself till evening, on the plea that she needed rest. The truth was, however, that she shrank from first meeting the family at table, a place which allows so little escape from embarrassment.

Her door had been left ajar; and in a few minutes she heard a silken rustling on the stairs, then a faint tap; and at her summons there entered a small, lily-faced woman who looked like something that might have grown out of the pallid March evening. The silver-gray of her trailing dress, the uncertain tints of her hair, deepening from flaxen to pale brown, even the cobwebby Mechlin laces she wore, so thin as to have no color of their own—all were like light, cool shadows. This lady entered with a dainty timidity which by no means excluded the most perfect self-possession, but rather indicated an extreme solicitude for the person she visited.

"Do I intrude?" she asked, in a soft, hesitating way. "Mr. Granger thought I might come up. We feared that you were ill."

Margaret was annoyed to feel herself blushing. There was something keen in this lady's beautiful violet eyes, underneath their superficial expression of anxious kindness.

"I am not ill, only tired," she replied. "I meant to go down awhile after dinner."

"I am Mrs. Lewis," the stranger announced, seating herself by the bedside. "My husband and I, and my husband's niece, Aurelia Lewis, live here. We don't call it boarding, you know. I hope that you will like us."

This wish was expressed in a manner so *naïve* and earnest that Margaret could but smile in making answer that she was quite prepared to be pleased with everything, and that her only fear was lest she might disturb the harmony of their circle—not by being disagreeable in herself, but simply in being one more.

With a gesture at once graceful and kind, Mrs. Lewis touched Margaret's hand with her slight, chilly fingers. "You are the one more whom we want," she said; "we have been rejoicing over the prospect of having you with us. You do not break, you complete, the circle."

Her quick ear had caught a lingering tone of pain; and she had already found something pathetic in that thin face and those languid eyes. Miss Hamilton did not appear to be a person likely to disturb the empire which this lady prided herself on exercising over their household.

"I know very little about the family," Margaret remarked. "Mr. Granger mentioned some names. I am not sure if they were all. And men never think of the many trifles we like to be told."

Her visitor sighed resignedly. "Certainly not—the sublime creatures! It is the difference between fresco and miniature, you know. Let me enlighten you a little. Besides those of us whom you have seen, there are only Mr. Southard, my husband, and Aurelia. We consider ourselves a very happy family. Of course, being human, we have occasional jars; but there is always the understanding that our real friendship is unimpaired by them. And we defend each other like Trojans from any outside attack. We try to manage so as to have but one angry at a time, the others acting as peacemakers. The only one who may trouble you is my husband. I am anxious concerning him and you."

With her head a little on one side, the lady contemplated her companion with a look of pretty distress.

"Forewarned is forearmed," suggested Miss Hamilton.

"Why, you see," her visitor said confidentially, "Mr. Lewis is one of those provoking beings who take a mischievous delight in misrepresenting themselves, not for the

better, but the worse. If they see a person leaning very much in one way, they are sure to lean very much the other way. Mr. Southard calls my husband an infidel, whatever that is. There certainly are a great many things which he does not believe. But one half of his scepticism is a mere pretence to tease the minister. I hope you won't be vexed with him. You won't when you come to know him. Sometimes I don't altogether blame him. Of course we all admire Mr. Southard in the most fatiguing manner; but it cannot be denied that he does interpret and perform his duties in the pre-raphaelite style, with a pitiless adherence to chapter and verse. Still, I often think that much of his apparent severity may be in those chiselled features of his. One is occasionally surprised by some sign of indulgence in him, some touch of grace or tenderness. But even while you look, the charm, without disappearing, freezes before your eyes, like spray in winter. I don't know just what to think of him; but I suspect that he has missed his vocation, that he was made for a monk or a Jesuit. It would never do to breathe such a thought to him, though. He thinks that the Pope is Antichrist."

"And isn't he?" calmly asked the granddaughter of the Rev. Doctor Hamilton.

Mrs. Lewis put up her hand to refasten a bunch of honey-sweet tuberose that were slipping from the glossy coils of her hair, and by the gesture concealed a momentary amused twinkle of her eyes.

"Oh! I dare say!" she replied

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lightly. "But such a dear, benignant old antichrist as he is! Ages ago, when we were in Rome, I was in the crowd before St. Peter's when the pope gave the Easter benediction. Involuntarily I knelt with the rest; and really, Miss Hamilton, that seemed to me the only benediction I ever received. I did not understand my own emotion. It was quite unexpected. Perhaps it was something in that intoxicating atmosphere which is only half air; the other half is soul."

Margaret was silent. She had no wish to express any displeasure; but she was shocked to hear the mystical Babylon spoken of with toleration, and that by a descendant of the puritans.

Mrs. Lewis sat a moment with downcast eyes, aware of, and quietly submitting to the scrutiny of the other—by no means afraid of it, quite confident, probably, that the result would be agreeable.

This lady was about forty years of age, delicate rather than beautiful, with a frosty sparkle about her. Her manner was gentleness itself; but one soon perceived something fine and sharp beneath; a blue arrowy glance that carried home a phrase otherwise light as a feather, a slight emphasis that made the more obvious meaning of a word glance aside, an unnecessary suavity of expression that led to suspicion of some pungent hidden meaning. But with all her airy malice there was much of genuine honesty and kind feeling. She was like a faceted gem, showing her little glittering shield at every turn; but still a gem.

"Aurelia is quite impatient to welcome you," she resumed softly. "You cannot fail to like her, when you happen to think of it. She is sweet and beautiful all through.

"Now I will leave you to take your

rest, and read the note of which Mr. Granger made me the bearer. I hope to see you this evening."

Margaret looked after the little lady as she glided away, glancing back from the door with a friendly smile and nod, then disappeared, soundless save for the rustling of her dress. She listened to that faint silken whisper on the stairs, then to the soft shutting of the parlor door, two pushes before it latched. Then she read her note. It was but a line. "Rest as long as you wish to. But when you are able to come down, we all want to see you."

She went down to the parlor after dinner, and found the whole family there. There was yet so much of daylight that one gentleman, sitting in a western window, was reading the evening paper by it; but the stream of gaslight that came in from some room at the end of the long *suite* made a red-golden path across the darkened back-parlor, and caught brightly here and there on the carving of a picture, a curve of bronze or marble, or the gilding of a book-cover, and glimmered unsteadily over a winged Mercury that leaned out of the vague dusk and sparkle, tiptoe, at point of flight, with lifted face and glinting eyes.

Mr. Granger stood near the door by which Margaret entered, evidently on the watch for her; and at sight of him that slight nervous embarrassment inseparable from her circumstances, and from the unstrung condition of her mind and body, instantly died away. To her he was strength, courage, and protection. Shielded by his friendship, she feared nothing.

Mrs. Lewis and Dora met her like old friends; that florid gentleman with English side-whiskers she guessed to be Mr. Lewis; and she recognized that fine profile clear against the opaline west.

Mr. Southard came forward at once, scarcely waiting for an introduction.

"A granddaughter of the Rev. Doctor Hamilton?" he said with emphasis. "I am happy to see you."

Miss Hamilton received tranquilly his cordial salutation, and mentally consigned it to the manes of her grandfather.

Mr. Lewis got up out of his arm-chair, and bowed lowly. "Madam," he said with great deliberation, "I do not in the least care who your grandfather was. I am glad to see *you*."

"Thank you!" said Margaret.

The gentleman settled rather heavily into his chair again. He was one of those who would rather sit than stand. Margaret turned to meet his niece, who was offering her hand, and murmuring some word of welcome. She looked at Aurelia Lewis with delight, perceiving then what Mrs. Lewis had meant in saying that her husband's niece was sweet and beautiful all through. The girl radiated loveliness. She was a blonde, with deep ambers and browns in her hair and eyes, looking like some translucent creature shone through by rich sunset lights too soft for brilliancy. She was large, suave, a trifle sirupy, perhaps, but sweet to the core, had no salient points in her disposition, but a charmingly liquid way of adapting herself to the angles of others. If the looks and manners of Mrs. Lewis were faceted, those of her husband's niece were what jewelers call *en cabochon*. What Aurelia said was nothing. She was not a reportable person. What she *was* was delicious.

"I remember Doctor Hamilton very well," Mr. Lewis said when the ladies had finished their compliments. "He was one of those men

who make religion respectable. He held some pretty hard doctrines; but he believed every one of 'em, and held 'em with a grip. The last time I saw him was seven or eight years ago, just before his death. They had up their everlasting petition before the legislature here, for the abolition of capital punishment; and a committee was appointed to attend to the matter. I went up to one of their hearings. There were Phillips, Pierpont, Andrew, Spear, and a lot of other smooth-tongued, soft-hearted fellows who didn't want the poor, dear murderers to be hanged; and on the other side were Doctor Hamilton with his eyes and his cane, common sense, Moses and the decalogue. They had rather a rough time of it. Andrew called your grandfather an old foggy, over some one else's shoulders; and Phillips tilted over Moses, tables and all, with that sharp lance of his. But Doctor Hamilton stood there as firm as a rock, and beat them all out. He had the glance of an eagle, and a way of swinging his arm about, when he was in earnest, that looked as if it wouldn't take much provocation to make him hit straight out. Phillips said something that he didn't like, and the doctor stamped at him. Well, the upshot of the matter was, that capital punishment was not abolished that year, thanks to one tough, intrepid old man."

"My grandfather was very resolute," said Margaret, with a slight, proud smile.

"Yes," answered Mr. Lewis, "he would have made a prime soldier, if he hadn't made the mistake of being a doctor of divinity."

"The church needed his authoritative speech," said Mr. Southard, with decision. "To the minister of God belongs the voice of denunciation as well as the voice of prayer."

Mr. Lewis gave his moustache an impatient twitch.

Mr. Granger seized the first opportunity to speak aside to Margaret. "You like these people? You are contented?" he asked hastily.

"Yes, and yes," she replied.

"You think that you will feel at home when you have become better acquainted with them?" he pursued.

"It seems to me that I have always lived here," she answered, smiling. "There is not the least strangeness. Indeed, surprising things, if they are pleasant, never surprise me. I am always expecting miracles. It is only painful or trivial events which find me incredulous and ill at ease."

The chandeliers were lighted, and the windows closed; but, according to their pleasant occasional custom, the curtains were not drawn for a while yet. If any person in the street took pleasure in seeing this family gathering, they were welcome.

Mrs. Lewis broke a few sprays from a musk-vine over-starred with yellow blossoms, and twined them into a wreath as she slowly approached the two who were standing near a book-case. "*Vive le roi!*" she said, lifting the wreath to the marble brows of a Shakespeare that stood on the lower shelf.

Margaret glanced along a row of blue and brown covers, and exclaimed, "My Brownings! all hail! there they are!"

"You also!" said Mrs. Lewis, with a grimace. "Own, now, that they jolt horribly—that the Browning Pegasus is a racker, and that the Browning road up Parnassus is macadamized with—well, diamonds, if you will, but diamonds in the rough. True, the hoofs do make dents; they do dash over the ground with a four-footed trampling; but—" a shrug and a shiver completed the sentence.

"Mrs. Browning needs a lapidary,"

Mr. Granger said; "but her husband's constipated style is a necessity. His books are books of quintessences. At first I thought him suggestive; but soon perceived that he was stimulating instead. He seems to have brushed a subject. Look again, and you will see that he has exhausted it."

Margaret read the titles of the books, and in them read, also, something of the minds of her new associates. There were a few shining names from each of the great nations, and a good selection of English and American authors, the patriarchs in their places. She had a word for each, but thought, "I wonder why I like Lowell, almost in silence, yet like him best."

Near this was another case of books, all Oriental, or relating to the Orient. There were the Talmud and the Koran; there were hideous mythologies full of propitiatory prayers to the devil. There were *Vathek*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Ferdousi*, and a hundred others. Over this case hung an oval water-color of sea and sky with a rising sun blazing at the horizon, lighting with flickering gold a path across the blue, liquid expanse, and flooding with light the ethereal spaces. On a scroll beneath this was inscribed, "Ex Oriente Lux."

"Light and hasheesh," said Mr. Southard laughingly. "Don't linger there too long."

Mr. Granger called Dora to him.

"What has my little girl been learning to-day?" he asked.

The little one's eyes flashed with a sudden, glorious recollection. "O papa! I can spell cup."

The father was suitably astonished.

"Is it possible? Let me hear."

The child raised her eyebrows, and played the coquette with her erudition. "You spell it," she said tauntingly.

Mr. Granger leaned back in his

ch. ir, and knitted his brows in intense study. "T-a-s-s-e, cup."

"No-o, papa," said the fairy at his knee.

"T-a-z-z-a, cup!" he essayed again.

Dora snook her flossy curls.

"T-a-z-a, cup!" he said desperately.

The child looked at him with tears in her eyes.

"Oh!" he said, "c-u-p, cup!" at which she screamed with delight.

"How blue it sounds," said Margaret. "Like a Canterbury bell with a handle to it."

A tray was brought in with coffee, which was Dora's signal to go to bed. She took an affectionate leave of all, but hid her face in Margaret's neck in saying good night.

"Who was the little girl in the picture?" she whispered.

"It was you, dear," was the reply.

"I kept thinking of it this ever so long," said the child.

Her father always accompanied her to the foot of the stairs; and the two went out together, Dora clinging to his hand, which she held against her cheek, and he looking down upon her with a fond smile.

Margaret shrank with a momentary spasm of pain and terror, as she looked after them. How fearful is that clinging love which human beings have for each other! how terrible, since, sooner or later, they must part; since, at any instant, the hand of fate may be outstretched to snatch them asunder!

"Are you ill?" whispered Aurelia, touching her arm.

Margaret started, and recollected herself with an effort; then smiled without an effort; for the door opened, and Mr. Granger came in again, glancing first at her, then coming to sit near her.

"I have found out the origin of coffee," Mrs. Lewis said. "It is, or

is capable of being, a Mohammedan legend. I will tell you. When Mother Eve, to whom be peace! fell, after her sin, from the seventh heaven, and was precipitated to earth, as she slipped over the verge of Paradise, she instinctively flung out her arm, and caught at a shrub with milk-white blossoms that grew there. It broke in her hand. She fell into Arabia, near Mocha. The branch that fell with her took root and grew, and had blossoms with five petals, as white as the beautiful Mother's five fingers. And that's the history of coffee. Aura, give me a cup without delay. That story was salt."

"Why should we not have sentiments with so wonderful a draught?" Mr. Granger said. "Propose anything. Shall I begin? I have been reading the European news. Victor Emmanuel is dawning like a sun over Italy. I propose Rome, the dead lion, with honey for Samson."

Mr. Lewis pushed out his underlip. He always scouted at republicans, red or black.

"I follow you," he said immediately, with a sly glance at Mr. Southard. "Rome, the rock that does not crack, though all the bores blast it,"

There was a momentary pause, during which the eyes of the minister scintillated. Then he exclaimed, "Luther, the Moses at the stroke of whose rod the rock was rent, and the gospel waters loosed."

"Ah! Luther!" endorsed Mr. Lewis with an affectation of enthusiasm. "Greater than Nimrod, he built a Babel which babbles to the ends of the earth."

Mr. Southard flashed out, "Yes; and every tongue can spell the word Bible, sir!"

"And deny its plainest teachings," was the retort; "and vilify the hand that preserved it!"

"Now, Charles," interposed Mrs.



Lewis, touching her husband's arm, "why will you say what you do not mean, just for the sake of being disagreeable? You know, Mr. Southard, that he cares no more for Rome than he does for Pekin, and knows no more about it, indeed. The fact is, he has the greatest respect for our church—may I say *militant*?"

"Sweet peacemaker!" exclaimed Mr. Lewis, delighted with the neat little sting at the end of his wife's speech.

Aurelia lifted her cup, and interposed with a laughing quotation:

"'Here's a health to all those that we love. Here's a health to all them that love us. Here's a health to all those that love them that love those that love them that love those that love us.'"

This was drunk with acclamations, and peace restored.

After a while Mr. Lewis managed, or happened, to find Margaret apart.

"I protest I never had a worse opinion of myself than I have to-night," he said. "There I had promised Louis and my wife to let religion alone, and not get up a skirmish with the minister for at least a week after you came; and I meant to keep my promise. But you see what my resolutions are worth. I am sincerely sorry if I have vexed you."

He looked so sorry, and spoke so frankly, that Margaret could not help giving him a pleasant answer, though she had been displeased.

"The fact is," he went on, lowering his voice, "I have seen so much cant, and hypocrisy, and inconsistency in religion that it has disgusted me with the whole business. I may go too far. I don't doubt that there are honest men and women in the churches; but to my mind they are few and far between. I've nothing to say against Mr. Southard, and I

don't want any one else to speak against him. I say uglier things to his face than I would say behind his back. He's a good man, according to his light; but you must permit me to say that it is a Bengal-light to my eyes. I can't stand it. It turns me blue all through."

"Perhaps you do not understand him," Margaret suggested. "May be you haven't given him a chance to explain."

"I tried to be fair," was the reply. "Now Southard," said I, "tell me what you want me to believe, and I'll believe if I can." Well, the first thing he told me was, that I must give up my reason. 'By George, I won't!' said I, and there was an end to the catechism. Of course, if I set my reason aside, I might be made to believe that chalk is cheese. Perhaps I am stubborn and material, as he says; but I am what God made me; and I won't pretend to be anything else. I believe that there is somewhere a way for us all—a way that we shall know is right, when once we get into it. These fishers of men ought to remember that whales are not caught with trout-hooks, and that it isn't the whale's fault if there's a good deal of blubber to get through before you reach the inside of him. St. Paul let fly some pretty sharp harpoons. I can't get 'em out of me for my life. And, for another kind of man, I like Beecher. His bait isn't painted flies, but fish, a piece of yourself. But the trouble with him is, there's no barb on his catch. You slip off as easily as you get on."

Margaret was glad when the others interposed and put an end to this talk. To her surprise, she had nothing to reply to Mr. Lewis's objections. And not only that, but, while he spoke, she perceived in her own mind a faint echo to his dissatisfaction. Of course it must be wrong.

and she was glad to have the conversation put an end to.

They had music, Aurelia playing with a good deal of taste some perfectly harmless pieces. While she listened, Miss Hamilton's glance wandered about the rooms, finding them quite to her taste. The first impertinent gloss of everything had worn off, and each article had mellowed into its place, like the colors of an old picture. There was none of that look we sometimes see, of everything having been dipped into the same paint-pot. The furniture was rich in material and beautiful in shape; the upholstery a heavy silk and wool, the colors deep and harmonious, nothing too fine for use. The dull amber of the walls was nearly covered with pictures, book-cases, cabinets, and brackets; there was every sort of table, from the two large central ones with black marble tops, piled with late books and periodicals, to the tiny teapots that could be lifted on a finger, marvels of gold, and japanning, and ingenious Chinese perspective. On the black marble mantel-piece near her were a pair of silver candelabra, heirlooms in the family, and china vases of glowing colors, purple, and rose, and gold. There was more bronze than parian; there were curtains wherever curtains could be; and withal, there was plentiful space to get about, and for the ladies to display their trains.

All this her first glance took in with a sense of pleasure. Then she looked deeper, and perceived friendship, ease, security, all that make the soul of home. Deeper yet, then, to the vague longing for a love, a security, a rest exceeding the earthly. One who has suffered much can never again feel quite secure, but shrinks from delight almost as much as from pain.

She turned to Mr. Southard, who

sat beside her. "I am thinking how miserably we are the creatures of circumstance," she said, in her earnestness forgetting how abrupt she might seem. "When we are troubled, everything is dark; when we are happy, everything that approaches casts its shadow behind, and shows a sunny front."

He regarded her kindly, pleased with her almost confidential manner. "There is but one escape from such slavery," he said. "When we set the sun of righteousness in the zenith of our lives, then shadows are annihilated, not hidden, but annihilated."

When Margaret went up-stairs that night, she knelt before her open window, and leaned out, feeling, rather than seeing, the brooding, starless sky, soft and shadowy, like wings over a nest. Her soul uplifted itself blindly, almost painfully, beating against its ignorance. There was something out of sight and reach, which she wanted to see and to touch. There was one hidden whom she longed to thank and adore.

"O brooding wings!" she whispered, stretching out her hands. "O father and mother-bird over the nest where the little ones lie in the sweet, sweet dark!"

Words failed. She knew not what to say. "I wish that I could pray!" she thought, tears overflowing her eyes.

Margaret did not know that she had prayed.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### JUST BEFORE LIGHT.

The days were well arranged in the Granger mansion. Breakfast was a movable feast, and silent for the most part. The members of the family broke their fast when and as they liked, often with a book or paper for company.

Most persons feel disinclined to talk in the morning, and are social only from necessity. This household recognized and respected the instinct. One could always hold one's tongue there. If they did not follow the old Persian rule never to speak till one had something to say worth hearing, they at least kept silence when they felt so inclined.

Luncheon was never honored by the presence of the gentlemen, except that on rare occasions Mr. Southard came out of his study to join the ladies, who by this time had found their tongues. They preferred his usual custom of taking a scholarly cup of tea in the midst of his books.

To the natural woman an occasional gossip is a necessity; and if ever these three ladies indulged in that pardonable weakness, it was over their luncheon. At six o'clock all met at dinner, and passed the evening together. This disposition of time left the greater part of the day free, for each one to spend as he chose, and brought them together again at the close of the day, more or less tired, always glad to meet, often with something to say.

Margaret found herself fully and pleasantly occupied. Besides translating, she had again set up her easel, and spent an hour or two daily at her former pretty employment. The value of her services increased, she found, in proportion as she grew in different to rendering them; and she could now select her own work, and dictate terms. But her most delightful occupation was the teaching her three little pupils.

There are two ways of teaching children. One is to seek to impose on them our own individuality, to dogmatize, in utter unconsciousness that they are the most merciless of critics, frequently the keenest of observers, and that they do not so much

lack ideas, as the power of expression. Such teachers climb on to a pedestal, and talk complacently downward at pupils who, perhaps, do not in the least consider them classical personages. We cannot impose on children unless we can dazzle them, sometimes not even then.

The other mode is to stand on their own platform, and talk up, not logically, according to Kant or Hamilton, but in that circuitous and inconsequent manner which is often the most effectual logic with children. We all know that the greatest precision of aim is attained through a spiral bore; and perhaps these young minds oftener reach the mark in that indirect manner, than they would by any more formal process.

This was Miss Hamilton's mode of teaching and influencing children, and it was as fascinating to her as to them. She treated them with respect, never laughed at their crude ideas, did not require of them a self-control difficult for an adult to practice, and never forgot that some ugly duck might turn out to be a swan. But where she did assert authority, she was absolute; and she was merciless to insolence and disobedience.

"I want cake. I don't like bread and butter," says Dora.

Mrs. James fired didactic platitudes at the child, Aurelia coaxed, and Mrs. Lewis preached hygiene. Miss Hamilton knew better than either. She sketched a bright word-picture of waving wheat-fields over-buzzed by bees, over-fluttered by birds, starred through and through with little intrusive flowers that had no business whatever there, but were let stay; of the shaking mill where the wheat was ground, and the gay stream that laughed, and set its shining shoulder to the great wheel, and pushed, and ran away, blind with foam; of the yeasty sponge, a pile of milky bub-

bleu. She told of sweet clover-heads, red and white, and the cow and the bees seeing who should get them first. 'I want them for my honey,' says the bee. 'And I want them for my cream,' says Mooly. And they both made a snatch, and Mooly got the clover, and perhaps a purple violet with it, and the cream got the sweetness of them, and then it was churned, and there was the butter! She described the clean, cool dairy, full of a ceaseless flicker of light and shade from the hop-vines that swung outside the window, and waved the humming-birds away, of pans and pans of yellow cream, smooth and delicious, of fresh butter just out of the churn, glowing like gold through its bath of water, of pink and white petals of apple-blossoms drifting in on the soft breeze, and settling—"who knows but a pink, crimped-up-at-the-edges petal may have settled on this very piece of butter? Try, now, if it doesn't taste apple-blossomy."

Nonsense, of course, when viewed from a dignified altitude; but when looked up at from a point about two feet from the ground, it was the most excellent sense imaginable. To these three little girls, Dora, Agnes, and Violet, Miss Hamilton was a goddess.

Margaret did not neglect her own mind in those happy days. Mr. Southard marked out for her a course of reading in *which*, it is true, poetry and fiction, with a few shining exceptions, were tabooed; but metaphysics was permitted; and history enjoined to come upon tomes, striking octaves up the centuries, and dying away in tinkling mythologies. She read conscientiously, sometimes with pleasure, sometimes with a half-acknowledged weariness.

Mr. Southard was a severe Mentor. As he did not spare himself, so he did not spare others, still less Margaret.

She failed to perceive, what was plain to the others, that, by virtue of her descent, he considered her his especial charge, and was trying to form her after his notions. She acquiesced in all his requirements, half from indifference, half from a desire to please everybody, since she was herself so well pleased; and then forgot all about him. It was out of his power to trouble her save for a moment.

"You yield too much to that man," Mrs. Lewis said to her one day. "He is one of those positive persons who cannot help being tyrannical."

"He has a fine mind," said Margaret absently.

"Yes," the lady acknowledged in a pettish tone. "But if he would send a few pulses up to irrigate his brain, it would be an improvement."

Of course Mr. Southard spoke of religion to his pupil, and urged on her the duty of being united with the church.

"I cannot be religious, as the church requires," she said uneasily, dreading lest he might overcome her will without convincing her reason. "I think that it is something cabalistic."

"Your grandfather, and your father and mother did not find it so," the minister said reprovingly.

Margaret caught her breath with pain, and lifted her hand in a quick, silencing gesture. "I never bury my dead!" she said; and after a moment added, "It may be wrong, but this religion seems to me like a strait-jacket. I like to read of David dancing before the ark, of dervishes whirling, of Shakers clapping their hands, of Methodists singing at the tops of their voices 'Glory Hallelujah!' or falling into trances. Religion is not fervent enough for me. It does not express my feelings. I hardly know what I need. Perhaps I am all wrong."

She stopped, her eyes filling with tears of vexation.

But even as the drops started, they brightened; for, just in season to save her from still more pressing exhortation, Mr. Granger sauntered across the room, and put some careless question to the minister.

Mr. Southard recollected that he had to lecture that evening, and left the room to prepare himself.

"I am so glad you came!" Margaret said, "I was on the point of being bound, and gagged, and blindfolded."

Mr. Granger took the chair that the minister had vacated, and drew up to him a little stand on which he leaned his arms, "I perceived that I was needed," he said. "There was no mistaking your besieged expression; and I saw, too, that look in Mr. Southard's face which tells that he is about to pile up an insurmountable argument. I do not think that you will be any better for having religious discussions with him. You will only be fretted and uneasy. Mr. Southard is an excellent man, and a sincere Christian; but he is in danger of mistaking his own temperament for a dogma."

"If I thought that, then I shouldn't mind so much," Margaret said. "But I have been taking for granted that he is right and I wrong, and trying to let him think for me. The result is, that instead of being convinced, I have only been irritated. I must think for myself, whether I wish to or not. Now he circumscribes my reading so. It is miscellaneous, I know; but I am curious about everything in the universe. I don't like closed doors. He thinks my curiosity trivial and dangerous, and reminds me that a rolling stone gathers no moss."

"And I would ask, with the canny Scotchman, 'what good does the

moss do the stone?'" Mr. Granger replied. "The fact is, you've got to do just as I did with him. He and I fought that battle out long ago, and now he lets me alone, and we are good friends. Be as curious as you like. I heard him speak with disapproval of your going to the Jewish synagogue last week, and I dare say you resolved not to go again. Go, if you wish; and don't ask his permission. He frowned on the Greek anthology, and you laid it aside. Take it up again if you like. Even pagan flowers catch the dews of heaven. Your own good taste and delicacy will be a sufficient censor in matters of reading."

"Now I breathe!" Margaret said joyfully. "Some people can bear to be so hemmed in; but I cannot. It does me harm. If I am denied a drop of water, which, given, would satisfy me, at once I thirst for the ocean. I cannot help it. It is my way."

"Don't try to help it," Mr. Granger replied decisively; "or, above all, don't allow any one else to try to help it for you. I have no patience with such impositions. It is an insult to humanity, and an insult to Him who created humanity, for any one person to attempt to think for another. Obedience and humility are good only when they are voluntary, and are practised at the mandate of reason. There are people who never go out of a certain round, never want to. They are born, they live, and they die, in the mental and moral domicile of their forefathers. They have no orbit, but only an axis. Stick a precedent through them, and give them a twirl, and they will hum on contentedly to the end of the chapter. I've nothing against them, as long as they let others alone, and don't insist that to stay in one place and buzz is the end

of humanity. Other people there are who grow, they are insatiably curious, they dive to the heart of things, they take nothing without a question. They are not quite satisfied with truth itself till they have compared it with all that claims to be truth. Let them look, I say. It's a poor truth that won't bear any test that man can put to it. The first are, as Coleridge says, 'very positive, but not quite certain' that they are right; to the last a conviction once won is perfect and indestructible. Rest with them is not vegetation, but rapture.

"Fly abroad, my wild bird! don't be afraid. Use your wings. That is what they were made for."

Margaret forgot to answer in listening and looking at the speaker's animated face. When Mr. Granger was in earnest, he had an impetuous way that carried all before it. At the end, his shining eyes dropped on her and seemed to cover her with light; the impatient ring in his voice softened to an indulgent tenderness. Margaret felt as a flower may feel that has its fill of sun and dew, and has nothing to do but bloom, and then fade away. She had no fear of this man, no sense of humiliation with regard to the past. Her gratitude toward him was boundless. To him she owed life and all that made life tolerable, and any devotion which he could require of her she was ready to render. Her friendship was perfect, deep, frank, and full of a silent delight. She did not deify him, but was satisfied to find him human. He could speak a cross word if his beef was over-done, his coffee too weak, or his paper out of the way when he wanted it. He could criticise people occasionally, and laugh at their weakness, even when his kind heart reproached him for doing it. He liked to lounge

on a sofa and read, when he had better be about his business. He needed rousing, she thought; was too much of a Sybarite to live in a world full of over-worked people. Perhaps he was rusting. But how kind and thoughtful he was; how full of sympathy when sympathy was needed; how generously he blamed himself when he was wrong, and how readily forgot the faults of others. How impossible it was for him to be mean or selfish! His rich, sweet, slow nature reminded her of a rose; but she felt intuitively that under that silence was hidden a heroic strength.

Mr. Southard's lecture was on the Jesuits; and all the family were to go and hear him.

"Terribly hot weather for such a subject," Mr. Lewis grumbled. "But it wouldn't be respectful not to go. Don't forget to take your smelling-salts, girls. There will be a strong odor of brimstone in the entertainment."

Margaret went to the lecture with a feeling that was almost fear. To her the name of Jesuit was a terror. The day of those powerful, guileful men was passed, surely; and yet, what if, in the strange vicissitudes of life, they should revive again? She was glad that the minister was going to raise his warning voice; yet still, she dreaded to hear him. The subject was too exciting.

The lecture was what might be expected. Beginning with Ignatius of Loyola, the speaker traced the progress of that unique and powerful society through its wonderful increase, and its downfall, to the present time, when as he said, the bruised serpent was again raising its head.

Mr. Southard did full justice to their learning, their sagacity, and their zeal. He told with a sort of

shrinking admiration how men possessed of tastes and accomplishments which fitted them to shine in the most cultivated society, buried themselves in distant and heathen lands, far removed from all human sympathy, hardened their scholarly hands with toil, encountered danger, suffered death—for what? That their society might prosper! The subject seemed to have for the speaker a painful fascination. He lingered while describing the unparalleled devotion, the pernicious enthusiasm of these men. He acknowledged that they proclaimed the name of Christ where it had never been heard before; he lamented that ministers of the gospel had not emulated their heroism; but there the picture was over-clouded, was veiled in blackness. It needed so much brightness in order that the darkness which followed might have its full effect.

We all know what pigments are used in that Plutonian shading—mental reservation, probableism, and the doctrine that the end justifies the means; the latter a fiction, the two former scrupulously misrepresented.

Here Mr. Southard was at home. Here he could denounce with fiery indignation, point with lofty scorn. The close of the lecture left the characters of the Jesuits as black as their robes. They had been lifted only to be cast down.

Miss Hamilton walked home with Mr. Granger, scarcely uttering a word the whole way.

"You do not speak of the lecture," he said when they were at the house steps. "Has it terrified you so much that you dare not? Shall you start up from sleep to-night fancying that a great black Jesuit has come to carry you off?"

"Do you know, Mr. Granger," she said slowly, "those men seem to

me very much like the apostles; in their devotion, I mean? I would like to read about them. They are interesting."

"Oh! they have, doubtless, books which will tell you all you want to know," he replied.

"*They!*" repeated Margaret. "But I want to know the truth."

Mr. Granger laughed. "Then I advise you to read nothing, and hear nothing."

"How then shall I learn?" demanded Miss Hamilton with a touch of impatience.

"Descend into the depth of your consciousness, as the German did when he wanted to make a correct drawing of an elephant."

"No," she replied remembering the story, "I will imitate the Frenchman; I will go to the elephant's country, and draw from life."

"That is not difficult," Mr. Granger said, amused at the idea of Miss Hamilton studying the Jesuits. "These elephants have jungles the world over. In this city you may find one on Endicott street, another on Suffolk street, and a third on Harrison avenue."

They were just entering the house. Margaret hesitated, and paused in the entry.

"You do not think this a foolish curiosity?" she asked wistfully. "You see no harm in my wishing to know something more about them?"

Mr. Granger was leaving his hat and gloves on the table. He turned immediately, surprised at the serious manner in which the question was put.

"Surely not!" he said promptly. "I should be very inconsistent if I did."

She stood an instant longer, her face perfectly grave and pale.

"You are afraid?" he asked smiling.

"No," she replied hesitatingly, "I don't think that is it. But I have all my life had such a horror of Catholics, and especially of Jesuits, that to resolve even to look at them deliberately, seems almost as momentous a step as Cæsar crossing the Rubicon."

## CHAPTER V.

## THE SWORD OF THE LORD AND OF GIDEON.

Boston, at the beginning of the war, was not a place to go to sleep in. Massachusetts politics, so long eminent in the senate, had at last taken the field; and that city, which is the brain of the State, effervesced with enthusiasm. Men the least heroic, apparently, showed themselves capable of heroism; and dreamers over the great deeds of others looked up to find that they might themselves be "the hymn the Brahmin sings."

Eager crowds surrounded the bulletin, put out by newspaper offices, or ran to gaze at mustering or departing regiments. Windows filled at the sound of a fife and drum; and it seemed that the air was fit to be breathed only when it was full of the flutter of flags.

Ceremony was set aside. Strangers and foes spoke to each other; and the most disdainful lady would smile upon the roughest uniform. From the Protestant pulpit came no more the exhortation to brotherly love, but the trumpet-call to arms; and under the wing of the Old South meeting-house rose a recruiting office, and a rostrum, with the motto, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

The Lord of that time was he at the touch of whose rod the flesh and the leaves were consumed with fire;

who sent for a sign a drench of dew on the fleece; at the command of whose servant all Ephraim shouted and took the waters before the flying Midianites, with the heads of Oreb and of Zeb on their spears.

Of course there was a good deal of froth; but underneath glowed the pure wine. It is true that many went because the savage instinct hidden in human nature rose from its unseen lair, and fiercely shook itself awake at the scent of blood. But others came from an honest sense of duty, and offered their lives knowing what they did; and women who loved them said amen. It was a stirring time.

It is not to be supposed that our friends were indifferent to these events. It was a doubtful point with them, indeed, whether they could be content to leave the city that summer. Mr. Southard was decidedly for remaining in town; and Mr. Granger, though less excited, was inclined to second him. But Mr. Lewis had, early in the spring, engaged a cottage at the seaside, with the understanding that the whole family were to accompany him there, and he utterly refused to release them from their promise. As if to help his arguments, the weather became intensely hot in June. Finally they consented to go.

"We owe you thanks for your persistence," Mr. Granger said, as they sat together the last evening of their stay in town. "I couldn't stand two months of this."

Mr. Lewis was past answering. Dressed in a complete suit of linen, seated in a wide Fayal chair, with a palm-leaf fan in one hand and a handkerchief in the other, he presented what his wife called an ill-tempered dissolving view. At that moment, the only desire of his heart was that one of Sydney Smith's, that he could



**take off his flesh and sit in his bones.**

Aurelia and Margaret sat near by, flushed, smiling, and languid, trying to look cool in their crisp, white dresses.

Miss Hamilton would scarcely be recognized by one who had seen her only three months before. Happiness had done its work, and she was beautiful. Her face had recovered its smooth curves and bloomy whiteness, and her lips were constantly brightening with the smile that was ever ready to come.

Mr. Granger contemplated the two young ladies with a patriarchal admiration. He liked to have beautiful objects in his sight; and surely, he thought, no other man in the city could boast of having in his family two such girls as those who now sat opposite him. Besides, what was best, they were friends of his, and regarded him with confidence and affection.

Mrs. Lewis glanced from them to him and back to them, and pouted her lip a little. "He is enough to try the patience of a saint!" she was thinking. "Why doesn't he marry one of those girls like a sensible man? To be sure, it is their fault. They are too friendly and frank with him, the simpletons! There they sit and beam on him with affectionate tranquillity, as if he were their grandfather. I'd like to give 'em a shaking."

Mr. Southard was walking slowly to and fro from the back-parlor to the front, and he, too, glanced frequently at the sofa where sat the two unconscious beauties. But no smile softened his pale face. It seemed, indeed, sterner than usual. The war was stirring the minister to the depths.

Mr. Lewis opened a blind near him. A beam of dusty gold came in from the west; he snapped the blind in its face.

"Seems to me it takes the sun a long time to get down," he said crossly. "I hope that none of your mighty Joshuas has commanded it to stand still."

No one answered. They sat in the sultry gloaming, and listened dreamily to the mingled city noises that came from near and far; the softened roll of a private carriage, like the touch of a gloved hand, after the knuckled grasp of drays and carts; the irritating wheeze of an inexorable hand-organ; and, through all, the shrill cry of the news-boy, the cicada of the city.

The good-breeding of the company was shown by the perfect composure of their silence, and the perfect quiescence of their minds, by the fact that their thoughts all drifted in the same direction, each one after its own mode.

Mrs. Lewis was thinking: "Those poor horses! I wish they knew enough to organize a strike, and all run away into the green, shady country."

The husband was saying relently to himself, "I declare I do pity the poor fellows who have to work during this infernal weather."

The others were still more in harmony with Mr. Granger when he spoke lowly, half to himself:

"If that beautiful idyl of Ruskin's could be realized; that country and government where the king should be the father of his people; where all alike should go to him for help and comfort; where he should find his glory, not in enlarging his dominion, but in making it more happy and peaceful! Will such a kingdom ever be, I wonder? Will such a golden age ever come?"

Margaret glanced with a swift smile toward Mr. Southard, and saw the twin of her thought in his face. He came and stood with his hand on the arm of her sofa.

"Both you and Mr. Ruskin are

unconsciously thinking of the same thing," he said, with some new sweetness in his voice, and brightness in his face. "What you mean can only be the kingdom of God; and it will come! it will come!"

Looking up smilingly at him, Margaret caught a smile in return; and then, for the first time, she thought that Mr. Southard was beautiful. The cold purity of his face was lighted momentarily by that glow which it needed in order to be attractive.

Aurelia rose, and crossing the room, flung the blinds open. The sun had set, and a slight coolness was creeping up.

"This butchery going on at the South looks as if the kingdom of God were coming with a vengeance," said Mr. Lewis, fanning himself.

"It is coming with a vengeance!" exclaimed Mr. Southard. "God does not work in sunshine alone. Job saw him in the whirlwind. Massachusetts soldiers have gone out with the Bible as well as the bayonet."

Mr. Lewis contemplated the speaker with an expression of wondering admiration that was a little overdone.

"What *did* God do before Massachusetts was discovered?" he exclaimed.

"I was surprised to hear, Mr. Granger, that your cousin Sinclair had joined a New York regiment," Mrs. Lewis said hastily. "Only the day before the steamer sailed in which he had engaged passage, some quixotic whim seized him, and he volunteered. I cannot conceive what induced him."

"I think the uniform was becoming," Mr. Granger said dryly.

"I pity his wife," pursued the lady, sighing. "Poor Caroline!"

"She has acted like a fool!" Mr. Lewis broke in angrily. "It was her fault that Sinclair went off. She thorned him perpetually with her ex-

actions. She forgot that lovers are only common folks in a state of evaporation, and that it is in the nature of things that they should get condensed after a time. She wanted him to be for ever picking up her pocket-handkerchief, and writing acrostics on her name. A man can't stand that kind of folderol when he's got to be fifty years old. We begin to develop a taste for common sense when we reach that age."

"He showed no confidence in her," Mrs. Lewis said, with downcast eyes. "He often deceived her, and therefore she always suspected him."

"I think that a man should have no concealments from his wife," said Mr. Southard emphatically.

"That's just what Samson's wife thought when her husband proposed his little conundrum to the Philistines," commented Mr. Lewis.

Margaret got up and followed Aurelia to the window.

"I am very sorry for Cousin Caroline," said Mr. Granger, in his state-liest manner, rising, also, and putting an end to the discussion.

"He is always sorry for any one who can contrive to appear abused," Mr. Lewis said to Margaret. "If you want to interest him, you must be as unfortunate as you can."

Margaret looked at her friend with eyes to which the quick tears started, and blessed him in her heart.

He was passing at the moment, and, catching the remark, feared lest she might be hurt or embarrassed.

"Don't you want to come out on to the veranda?" he asked, glancing back as he stepped from the long window.

The words were nothing; but they were so steeped in the kindness of the look and tone accompanying them that they seemed to be words of tenderness.

She followed him out into the twi-

light; the others came too, and they sat looking into the street, saying little, but enjoying the refreshing coolness. Other people were at their windows, or on their steps; and occasionally an acquaintance passing stopped for a word. After a while G——, the liberator, came along, and leaned on the fence a moment—a man with a ridge over the top of his bald head, that looked as if his backbone didn't mean to stop till it had reached his forehead, as probably it didn't; a soft-voiced, gently-speaking lion; but Margaret had heard him roar.

"Mr. G——," said Mr. Granger, "here is a lady with two dactyls for a name, Miss Margaret Hamilton. She will add another, and be Miriam, when your people come out through the Red Sea we are making."

"Have your cymbals ready, young prophetess," said the liberator. "The waters are lifting on the right hand and on the left."

The next day they went to the seaside, the ladies going in the morning to set things in order; the gentlemen not permitted to make their appearance till evening.

After a pleasant ride of an hour in the cars, they stepped out at a little way-station, where a carriage was awaiting them. About half a mile from this station, on a point of land hidden from it by a strip of thick woods, was their cottage.

The place was quite solitary; not a house in sight landward, though summer cottages nestled all about among the hills, hidden in wild green nooks. But across the water, towns were visible in all directions.

They drove with soundless wheels over a moist, brown road that wound and coiled through the woods. There had been a shower in the night that left everything washed, and the sky

cloudless. It was yet scarcely ten o'clock; and the air, though warm, was fresh and still. The morning sunshine lay across the road, motionless between the motionless dense tree-shadows; both light and shade so still, so intense, they looked like a pavement of solid gold and amber. If, at intervals, a slight motion woke the woods, less like a breeze than a deep and gentle respiration of nature, and that leaf-and-flower-wrought pavement stirred through each glowing abaciscus, it was as though the solid earth were stirred.

A faint sultry odor began to rise from the pine-tops, and from clumps of sweet-fern that stood in sunny spots; but the rank, long-stemmed flowers and trailing vines that grew under the trees were yet glistening with the undried shower; the shaded grass at the roadside was beaded, every blade, with minute sparkles of water; and here and there a pine-bough was thickly hung with drops that trembled with fulness at the points of its clustered emerald needles, and at a touch came clashing down in a shower that was distinctly heard through the silence.

The birds were taking their forenoon rest; but, as the carriage rolled lightly past, a fanatical *Lobolink*, who did not seem to have much common sense, but to be brimming over with the most glorious nonsense, swung himself down from some hidden perch, alighted in an utterly impossible manner on a spire of grass, and poured forth such a long-drawn, liquid, impetuous song, that it was a wonder there was anything of him left when it was over.

Three pairs of hands were stretched to arrest the driver's arm; three smiling, breathless faces listened till the last note, and watched the ecstatic little warbler swim away with an undulating motion, as if he floated

on the bubbling waves of his own song.

In a few minutes a turn of the road brought them in sight of the blue, salt water spread out boundlessly, sparkling, and sail-flecked; and presently they drove up at the cottage door.

This was a long, low building, all wings, like a moth; colored, like fungi, of mottled browns and yellows; overtrailed by woodbines and honeysuckles, through which you sometimes only guessed at the windows by the white curtains blowing out.

"Why, it is something that has grown out of the earth!" exclaimed Margaret. "See! the ground is all uneven about the walls as it is about the boles of trees."

This rural domicile faced the east and the sea; and an unfenced lawn sloped down to the beach where the tide was now creeping up with bright ripples chasing each other.

The house was pleasant enough, large and airy; and, after a few hours' work, they had everything in order. Then, tired, happy, and hungry, they sat down to luncheon.

"Isn't it delightful to get rid of men a little while, when you know that they are soon to come again?" drawled Aurelia, sitting with both elbows on the table, and her rich hair a little tumbled.

Margaret glanced at her with a smile of approval. "That sweet creature!" she thought. And said aloud, "You know perfectly well, Aura, that all the time they are gone we are thinking of them and doing something for them. Whom have we

been working for to-day but the gentlemen, pray?"

To her surprise, Aurelia's brown eyes dropped, and her beautiful face turned a sudden pink.

"I never could carve a fowl," said Mrs. Lewis plaintively. "But there must be a beginning in learning anything. I wish I knew where the beginning of this duck is. Aura, will you go look in that Audubon, and see how this creature is put together? We are likely to be worse off than Mr. Secretary Pepys, when the venison pasty turned out to be 'palpable mutton.' We shall have nothing."

Margaret started up. "Infirm of purpose, give me the carver!" she cried; and seizing the knife, in a moment of inspiration, triumphantly carved the mysterious duck, and betrayed its hidden articulations.

Mrs. Lewis contemplated her with great respect. "My dear," she said, "I have done you injustice. I have believed that though you could succeed admirably in the ornamental and the extraordinary, you had no faculty for common things. I acknowledge my error. 'Nemesis favors genius,' as Disraeli says of Burke."

After luncheon and a siesta, they dressed and went out onto the lawn to watch for the gentlemen, who presently appeared.

Mr. Granger presented Margaret with a spike of beautiful pink arethusa set in a ring of feathery ferns. "It came from a swamp miles away," he said. "I wanted to bring you something bright the first day."

"You always bring me something bright," she said.

## CHAPTER VI.

## PRESENTIMENTS.

MR. GRANGER's family took the full benefit of their holiday at the seaside. They rose before the lark, and watched the days come in: radiant, solemn mornings, all light and silence; tender, mist-veiled dawns, less like day than a dream of day; and angry, magnificent sunrises, blazing with stormy colors all over the sky, soon to be quenched in a fine gray fall of rain.

They lay in hammocks slung out under the pine-trees, till nature adopted them for her own, and little wild creatures came and went about them unscared.

"Margaret," Mrs. Lewis called, one day, out of her hammock over to the other, "you remember how the foxes went to St. Francis—wasn't it St. Francis?—and held out their paws to shake hands with him, and said, 'How do you do, St. Francis?' and he gave them his hand, and said, 'How do you do?'"

"I remember nothing of the kind," was the indignant reply. "But I know that Robinson Cru—"

"O fie!" cries the little lady. "Why won't you own that my legend is beautiful and sublime, whether true or not? And it will be true when the kingdom comes for which all good people pray. For the last hour I have been trying to get acquainted with a squirrel; but just as I thought that he understood me, and as I was about to offer my hand to him, the little wretch darted away. At this moment he is perched in the very top of a pine-tree, and peering down at me as if I were a hyena. Alas!"

They wandered on the beach at

evening, singing, talking, silent; or if in merry mood, skooning little flat stones over the water, and counting how many wave-tips they would trip before falling.

"*Mon amant m'aime—un peu—beaucoup — passionnément — pas du tout!*" laughed Mrs. Lewis, seeing Miss Hamilton counting to herself. "You must only try that oracle in flower petals, my dear. To count it in salt water signifies tears."

Sometimes they floated out in the harbor, and felt the fresh breath of the ocean, while the treacherous waters lapped, and fawned, and gurgled about the bows of their boat, and overhead the sky was thick with stars.

All this was not with the ladies mere idle pleasure, but was as seriously planned as it was heartily enjoyed. They had resolved that whatever exciting discussions and differences the gentlemen should have abroad, at home they should find nothing but peace. Politics were banished; and they sometimes even restrained their impatience to hear the war-news when they suspected that the relation was likely to produce any unpleasant entanglement. Without being religious, they yet had some perception of a pathway lying changeless and peaceful, far above parties and nationalities, and they felt that woman's proper place is there.

The gentlemen soon learned to submit to a restraint which they would never have imposed on themselves. When they stepped out at the little station near their cottage, their discussions were at an end.

"There is our flag of truce," Mr

Lewis would say, pointing to the thread of smoke that showed, over the trees. Mrs. James's kitchen-fire just kindled to prepare their dinner. "Understand, Mr. Southard, I oppose both you and Louis tooth and nail, and I'd like to fight it out with you now. But our time is up; and there are three little girls behind the trees there who would break their hearts if we should go home with cross faces. Let's shake hands till next time."

The only news of which they could all speak fearlessly and with pleasure was what concerned Mr. Granger's cousin. Scarcely a week passed that did not bring some laudation of him. He was one of those men who, without effort, are always conspicuous wherever they go. Opportunities that others sought with pain presented themselves unsought to him; and he had a gallant, dashing, and, withal, a lordly way that embellished even brilliant exploits.

"Upon my word," his cousin said, "at this rate it is not impossible that he may be made lieutenant-general."

Mr. Southard was, perhaps, the hardest to keep within bounds, probably because he felt himself religiously obliged to "cry aloud and spare not." But even he was subdued after a while. He seemed indeed too dependent on the ladies to willingly offend them. All the time he was not in the city he spent in their company, unbending as much as was possible to him, that his presence might not be a restraint on their pleasures. He brought his books to the parlor, and had his special corner there, the "lion's den," he called it, with a slight touch of reproach in his voice, when he saw how the others kept away from its vicinity. He rendered himself agreeable in many ways. He read aloud to them, he played and sang for them, sometimes he took the brush from Miss Hamilton's hand.

and helped her with a bolder line than she could achieve.

"It takes a strong hand to give a fine stroke," she said. "Where I would be delicate, I am only soft."

"Let me finish this for you, since the stippling is done," he said, as she paused to contemplate a major-general reposing pacifically on her easel. "I will not touch the face. Say what you will, there is a softness and richness in your shading which I can never attain. I may have a fine or bold touch, but it is hard. Shall I deepen this background a little to throw the figure out? And may I intensify his shoulder-straps?"

Margaret left her work to him, and, taking possession of his den, divided her attention between a book, and watching Dora at play with Aurelia outside.

Since they left the city the child had been set loose from all city restraints, and turned out to consort with bees and grasshoppers, harrowing the soul of Mrs. James by the number and heinousness of her soiled frocks and stockings, but drawing in full draughts of health. Both Dora and her father were bankers. But his bank in the city dealt in paper and specie; hers was a flower-bank. When she wanted him to buy her anything, she brought him buttercups, which were gold dollars with handles to them, and he scrupulously kept account and returned her change. No lover could wear in his buttonhole the rosebud presented by his lady's hand with a more tender pride than this father cherished for the bunch of wild-flowers given him by his little daughter.

Mrs. Lewis approached the minister's table, and began turning over his books. "I don't know anything," she said mournfully, opening a Greek copy of Homer, and passing her fingers caressingly over the dear little

quaint letters. "Wallace, wasn't it?— that poor Horace Binney—

'Doubly dead,  
In that he died so young,'

writes of the 'arrowy certainty of Grecian phrases.' Woe is me! I cannot get at the point. I can only see the feathering."

Margaret looked up with an exclamation from the book in her hand. "Listen! Coleridge, *à propos* of having republished his earlier poems without correction, writes, 'I was afraid of disentangling the weed for fear of snapping the flower.' Snapping! only a poet would have chosen that word. The flower-stem that you can *snap* must be of sudden and luxuriant growth, made up of water and color, with just fibre enough to hold the two together. As I read that, I thought instantly of a red tulip bursting up bright and hasty through the moist, warm mould. That sends me outdoors. I want to see weeds and flowers growing tangled together."

"Wait a little and let me go with you," Mr. Southard said. "And meantime let Mrs. Lewis read us one of her poems, as she promised to do."

Mrs. Lewis had been for years one of those pretty lady writers of which the country is full, by no means an artist, or dreaming of any such distinction, but writing acceptably to her friends, and sometimes pleasing a not too critical public. But she had abjured the pen from the day when a friendly publisher, meaning to compliment her, issued a volume of "Extracts" from her writings.

"A volume!" she cried in dismay. "Why not a bottle? There were my poor little fancies torn from their homes and set up in rows, like flies and bugs transfixed on pins. I shuddered. I wrote no more."

"I forgive you for asking me," she said to Mr. Southard. "I dare say you want to hear my rhyme, and

will think it very pretty. And she read:

#### BEATING THE BARS.

"O morning air! O pale, pure fire!  
Wrap and consume my bonds away.  
This stifling mesh of sordid flesh  
Shuts in my spirit from the day.

"Through sudden chinks the radiance ~~blinks~~,  
And drives the winged creature wild.  
She hears rejoice each ringing voice,  
She guesses at each happy child.

"In fleeting glints are shining hints  
Of freer beings, good and glad;  
Her dream can trace each lovely face,  
Each form, in lofty beauty clad.

"She hears the beat of joyous feet  
That break no flower, fear no thorn;  
And almost feels the breeze that steals  
From out the ever-growing morn.

"She hears the flow of voices low,  
And strains to catch the half-known tongue.  
She hears the gush of streams that rush  
Their thrilling waters into one.

"With longing sighs, her baffled eyes  
She sets where burn the unseen stars.  
With frantic heats her wings she beats,  
And breaks them on the stubborn bars.

"'O light!' she cries, 'unseal mine eyes,  
Or blind me in thine ardent glow.  
O life and breath! O life in death!  
O bonds! dissolve, and let me go.

"'Let drop this crust of cankering rust,  
The only crown my brow hath won;  
Shake off the sears of briny tears,  
And dry my pinions in the sun!'"

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Margaret.

"My dear," said Mrs. Lewis, "I do not mean it as a rule, but as an exception. That was written during my equinoctial."

Miss Hamilton waited for an explanation.

"You don't know it yet," the lady continued, "but you will learn in time that every woman has her line-gale. It usually comes between thirty and forty, sooner or later, and is more or less violent. After that, we settle down and let the snows fall on us."

Ending, she laughed a little; but there was a tightening of the lines about the mouth that showed at least remembered pain.

Margaret, going out, stopped to look over Mr. Southard's shoulder, drawn there by the absent, dreamy

expression of his face. If he was painting backgrounds, she thought, what mountains of melting blue, what far-away waters, half cloud, half glitter, must be stealing to life beneath his hand!

He had placed a blank sheet on the easel, and was idly covering it with fragmentary improvisations. Under the heading of "synonyms" he had written, "*Cogito quia sum, et sum quia cogito*," the text illustrated by a drawing of a cat running round after her own tail.

"Or a mouse going in at the same hole it came out from," thought Margaret.

He drew steady, straight lines, crossing them off with wonderful regularity; then some airy grace stole down to the tips of his firm white fingers, and the ends of the lines leaved and budded out, audacious tendrils draped the severest angles, and stars and crescents peeped through the spaces. Half impatiently he returned to geometrical figures; but pentagons grouped themselves to look like five-petaled blossoms or star-crystals of frost, and hexagons gathered themselves into a mosaic pavement whereon a sandalled foot was set.

"This is the Nile," he said, going over all with bold, flowing lines; "and here comes Cleopatra's barge, the dusky queen dropped among her cushions, a line of steady glow showing under each lowered eyelid, cords of cool pearls trying in vain to press into quiet her untamable pulses.

"This is a close-shut forest solitude, with a carpet of greenest, softest moss, whereon I lie like Danæ while the heavens shower gold on me."

Then, with a start, came recollection, and the rush-tip became an asp to the Egyptian, and the Greek was drowned in ink.

"Come out!" he said abruptly. "The air is close here."

"Will you come, Mrs. Lewis?" asked Miss Hamilton, looking back from the door.

The lady shook her head in an exhausted manner.

"Aura," said Margaret when they reached the veranda, "will you come down to the beach with us?"

"Thank you, dear," said Aurelia gently, "I do not care to go."

Miss Hamilton's eyes flashed a little impatiently. She did not like the way in which they withdrew themselves when she was with Mr. Southard. But after going a few steps, she glanced back at Aurelia, and the two smiled. At the moment it struck her that there was something new in Miss Lewis's expression, an unusual seriousness and dignity under her sweetness.

The day was sultry, but otherwise perfect, the green as fresh as at spring, the harbor purple and sparkling, and the sky a deep azure, except where a rim of darkness lay piled around the north and west, cloud-peaks and cliffs showing as hard and sharp as if hewn of stone, but illuminated now and then by lightnings that stirred uneasily within them, changing their dense shadows to molten gold, or leaping in dazzling crinkled flashes from point to point. It seemed a gala-day of nature, so wide, so brilliant, so consciously beautiful was everything.

"Visibly in his garden walketh God!" quoted Margaret, looking abroad with delight.

"The god Pan, you mean," said the minister, whose little sparkle of gayety seemed to have been suddenly extinguished.

"The Creator pronounced his work good," she said.

"Yes; but we have changed all that," was the reply. "We have put the heart in the wrong place."

"Moses and Molière," thought Miss Hamilton, amused at the juxtaposition.



position; then added aloud, "Christ pointed to the lilies of the field."

"For a moral and a reproof, yes. He made them not a text, but the illustration of a text. This delight in inanimate nature is not harmful if subordinate to the thought of God; otherwise it is a lure. It leads to materialism, or to sentimental religion that is worse than none, since it bars the way to a true piety."

Margaret made no reply. In spite of herself, his remarks depressed her, and cast some faint shadow over the beauty of the scene.

"The breakers are coming in," Mr. Southard said presently, in a tone of voice that showed his regretful sense of having been disagreeable. "We shall have a tempest."

They had reached the shore, and stood looking off over the water. The liquid emerald wave they watched came rolling toward them, paused an instant, then rose and flung itself at their feet, rustling away in foam and sliding, silky water, no longer a breaker, but a broken.

"Mr. Southard," Margaret said after a minute, "you know that I would like to be religious, if I knew how; but it doesn't seem possible. I am like one who, in the dark, wanting to get into a house, knocks all about the walls without finding a door. I am trying—in a sort of way—" She hesitated. What would he say if he knew in what way she was trying?

"Give up all," he said; "forget self; and think only of God."

"What you propose to me is not a path, but a pedestal!" she exclaimed, turning from him to go back to the house. "And I am not marble."

He followed her, looking both hurt and annoyed. Outside the door she stopped, and bending toward a little cluster of violets that grew there, shook a warning finger in their inno-

cent blue eyes. "Don't look at me," she said. "You're wicked!"

"Do not give all your kindness to those who think only of your temporal welfare," said the minister hastily. "Remember those also who care for your soul."

"Oh! why should I remember those who do me good for God's sake?" said Miss Hamilton coldly. "Let him reward them; I shall not."

There was no one in the parlor when they went in; but they did not perceive that at first it was so dim. The sky had darkened rapidly, the clouds rolling up as if self-impelled; for there was scarcely a breath of air stirring. A shadow had swept the sparkle off the water, and all the western view was shrouded in gloom. Southward a single point shone out like a torch amid the surrounding obscurity, a beam of sunlight dropping on it through a cleft cloud, and showing in a golden path visible across the heavens. Suddenly, like a torch, it was quenched; and all was darkness.

Mr. Southard stood before an open window, with his hands clasped behind him, and his clear eyes lifted heavenward. Margaret heard him repeating lowly, "'Canst thou send lightnings, and will they go, and will they return and say to thee, Here we are?'"

"After all," she said, "God is love. And however circumstances may hem us in from each other, he looks down on all. Perhaps some day, lifting us, each after his own way, he will show us not only himself, but one another, face to face. I think that there are more mistakes than sins in the world; and God is love."

"God is justice!" said the minister austere.

His words were almost lost in a low rumble of thunder that curdled all about the heavens. Margaret

stood beside him, and looked out at the piled-up blackness shot through by flying thunderbolts.

"Ossa upon Pelion," she said. "It is the battle of the gods over again, and Jove is everywhere, 'treading the thunders from the clouds of air.'"

As she spoke, a flash sprang from the north and a flash from the west, and caught in their glittering toils the grouped inky crests of the tempest, that for an instant stood out against the pale blue of the zenith, a stupendous, writhing Laocoon. Then the lightnings leaped from that height to the midst of the harbor, and stung the hissing waves till far and wide they quivered with a froth of flame. As they fell, the heavens seemed to burst in one awful report.

There were cries through the house, and the whole family, servants and all, came rushing into the parlor. Mr. Southard was leaning against the wall, with both hands over his face. The shock had been severe, and for a little while he was stunned.

"Are you hurt?" asked Aurelia, going to him at once.

He recovered himself, and looked up. "No. Where is Miss Hamilton?"

Miss Lewis drew back immediately, and showed him Margaret holding the frightened Dora in her arms and hushing her cries.

"God be thanked!" he exclaimed.

"We have all escaped."

"Are the skies falling?" cried Mrs. Lewis.

It seemed indeed as though they were. That thunder-clap had loosened the pent rain, and it came pouring down in floods, veiling them in grayness, the multitudinous plash and patter mingling with a sound like myriad chariot wheels driving overhead.

They closed the windows, which immediately became sheeted with water, the servants went back to their

places, Dora took courage, and ventured to uncover one blue eye, with which she looked askance at the window. Mrs. Lewis began to take an æsthetic view of the matter, and Miss Hamilton a practical, which she carried out by setting herself to kindle a fire against the coming of the absent ones. They were sure to be drenched.

She had wood brought, removed the pine boughs from the fireplace, and, kneeling on the hearth, began arranging the pile after the most scientific country fashion, miniature back-log, back-stick, and fore-stick, then the finished pyramid, sloping smoothly with the chimney. It was pretty enough to burn, built of birch, amber and golden-hearted, with bark of silver and cinnamon. Nothing else in woods so beautiful as those birch colors.

Then it must be lighted with ceremony, being their first fire, their belated a little belated. Fresh, drowned roses were snatched in out of the drip to crown the pyre, and the ladies had the temerity to despatch the minister, as officiating priest, with a wax taper, to bring sacred fire from the kitchen grate. Lucifer matches were not to be thought of.

The lambent flame shone softly out through the chinks, then reddened and grew broader, tongues of fire lapped the sticks, and disappeared and reappeared, becoming bolder each time, blistering brownly the silvery bark, catching at the edges, and rolling it up and off the sticks. Columns of milk-white smoke rose, propped by half-sheathed flames, and curled over, mimicking every order of convolution.

Mr. Southard recited:

"A gleam—a gleam from Ida's height,  
By the fire-god sent it came,  
From watch to watch it leaped, that light,  
As a rider rode the flame."

The smoke slat tlickly down, a moment; then a broad blaze burst out, wrapped the logs, and began to devour them, roaring like a lion.

The others gathered about the cheerful fire which was reflected in their faces; but Margaret glanced out at the storm, then went up to the long chamber entry from which a window looked down the townward road, and began walking to and fro there, wringing her hands, and listening to the wind and the rain lash the windows. A sudden darkness and terror had settled upon her. It was more than that atmospheric influence to which many are susceptible, more than a mere vague impression of evil; it was a thought as clearly defined as if some one had that moment given it utterance in her hearing, and it held her like a conviction. Some one whom she knew was at that instant dying, or dead!

Her hands grew cold; she shook as with an ague fit.

She had been too happy. She might have known that it could not last. She had known it. In all those happy months, had she not drunk every sweet moment with eager lips that had felt, and must again feel, the bitterness of thirst? Had she not constantly said to herself, It is too bright to last?

"I was not meant for earthly happiness," she thought, wringing her hands.

The walls shook in the clutch of the blast. Noises came up from the sea; and wild voices answered them from echoing rocks and from out the hollow woods. A great wall seemed to have risen between her and paradise, with a ceaseless swing of lightning guarding the entrance.

She fell on her knees and prayed, one of those terrible, voiceless prayers when the heart strains upward,

but utters no petition, because it dares not think what it fears or what it desires.

Leaning exhausted then against the window frame, whom should she see but her great drenched hero striding down the road, no form but his, she knew, though a slouched hat covered his face, and a long cloak wrapped him from neck to heel.

In a flash, the great wall changed its front, and now shut her inside paradise. She ran joyfully downstairs to open the door, and caught the wind and rain in her face, but caught also with them a smile.

"Where is Mr. Lewis?" she asked, thinking of that gentleman by a happy inspiration.

Mr. Granger stepped in and shook himself like a half-drowned Newfoundland dog. "Mr. Lewis stopped to drink General Sinclair's health. He will come down in the next train."

"General?"

"Yes; Maurice is made a brigadier. He doesn't have to climb the ladder, you see, the ladder comes down to him. And truly he is a gallant fellow. He goes in front of his men, and laughs at danger as he laughs at fortune."

"I've got a fire in the parlor for you," she said.

He looked at her smilingly, pleased at the childish delight in his coming which she did not try to hide. Why should she? "Have you? That's pleasant. Now help me off with my cloak. I cannot unfasten that buckle at the back of the neck. Stand on the stair with the railing between us, that you may not get wet."

As she stood near him, she caught a sweet breath of English violets.

"I brought them out for you," he said, giving them to her. "See! not a stem is broken."

She ran up-stairs to put the flowers in her chamber—they were too sa-

cred to be shared with others—and coming down, entered the parlor just after Mr. Granger. Presently Mr. Lewis appeared, and they had dinner.

The conversation chanced to turn on presentiments; and since they were all in very friendly humor, Miss Hamilton told of her afternoon terror, making it as presentable as possible. "I suffered a few minutes of mortal fear," she said. "I seemed to *know* that some dreadful accident had happened to one of the family. What is the meaning of those impressions that are often false, but sometimes true, and that come to us so suddenly, uninvited and unexpected?"

"They are the conclusion of which a woman is one of the premises," Mr. Lewis said in his rough way. "Did you ever hear of a man having presentiments? Of course not. He may have if his liver is out of order; not otherwise."

"I'm not bilious," pouted Miss Hamilton.

Mrs. Lewis had been listening with interest. She was one of those persons who believe that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in most philosophies. Her husband called her superstitious.

"I believe in those presentiments which come to us unexpectedly," she said. "We *may* know that they come from outside by the shock of their coming. We may not be clear. We may think that they point to the past or the present, when really they indicate the future. I think that what we call a true presentiment is a communication from some outside intelligence."

Margaret started and looked uneasily at the speaker. Mr. Lewis regarded his wife with affectionate contempt. "There's the woman

who always wishes when she sees two white-faced horses coming toward her, and when she sees the new moon over her right shoulder, and who won't wear an opal because it's an unlucky gem, though it is her favorite. That's the way with women. Their manner of arriving at conclusions is a caution to common sense.

Mrs. Lewis sugared her strawberries, and seemed to soliloquize. "'Two wings are better than ten legs,' says the butterfly to the caterpillar."

Mr. Granger good-naturedly came to the rescue. "It is my opinion," he said, "that these excessively reasonable people make as many mistakes as the most imaginative, only their mistakes are not so obvious, though often far worse. They chill fresh spontaneous feeling, they dampen enthusiasm, they wound hearts that they cannot heal. In ordinary matters, I set reason above all; but when we would measure the walls of the new Jerusalem, we must have a reed of gold, and it must be in the hand of an angel."

Mr. Southard had also his word to say in defence of woman against Mr. Lewis's slighting remarks. But his serious defence was more irritating than the others' laughing attack. He spoke honorably, and often truly; but in the tone of one who understands the subject, root and branch. The three ladies listening felt as if they were three primers with pretty pictures, and nice little good lessons in large print, which Mr. Southard had read with edification to himself in the intervals of more serious study.

"Woman," he said, "woman is—" And paused there, catching an impatient sparkle in Miss Hamilton's eyes.

"Oh! I know," she exclaimed with the stammering eagerness of a

child who can spell a big word—"I know what woman is! '*Hominis confusio*.' I—I read it in a book."

The minister sat silent and confounded.

"I propose the health of General Sinclair," said Mr. Lewis.

After dinner the party gathered about the parlor fire, and as it fell from flame to coal, told stories of hurricanes, and tornadoes, and shipwrecks, the fearful recitals intensifying their sense of comfort and safety.

While they talked, the storm passed away, and there was only the sound of vines swinging against the panes, and the ceaseless murmur of the sea. When they opened the window, clouds of perfume came in. The sky was quite clear, and there was a tinge of orange yet lingering in the west. In the east was a still brighter aurora, and the full moon, coming up, feathered with a crest of gold every crisp, bright wavelet.

They all went out and strolled down to the beach. Every leaf and twig and blossom, and the long line of the eaves, were hung full of glittering rain-drops, and the grass shone as if sheathed in burnished silver.

They sighed and were silent. A scene so lovely and peaceful is always like a rebuke.

#### CHAPTER VII.

"This monarch, so great, so powerful, must die, must die, must die."

"Praise be to him who liveth for ever."

During that whole summer there was a quiet but potent influence at work under Margaret Hamilton's superficial life; ever at work, yet silently, scarcely recognized by herself. The spark struck out by Mr. Southard in his anti-Catholic lecture was slowly kindling in the depths of her being.

There was not a thought of controversy in her mind. As she read, one doctrine after another appeared, and showed its harmony with some need of hers; or if not needed, it was not antagonistic, like the pleasant face of a stranger who may become a friend. Fortunately, no person and no book had said to her, You *must* believe; and so awakened opposition. Or if the obligation had been insinuated, she had not perceived it. She felt that it was for her alone to say what she must believe, as long as she invited truth generously, and was ready to accept it when it appeared to her with a truthful face. Of course she was not one to make syllogisms at every step, and, being a woman, was not likely to think that necessary. She looked up to find one truth after another standing smiling and confident on the threshold of her heart, and as smilingly she bade them welcome. Reason gave up the reins to intuition, and light came without a cloud. She realized nothing, till, startled by some outside call that woke a many-voiced stir of hitherto silent guests, she opened her eyes, and found herself a Catholic.

The first emotion was one of incredulity; then followed delight, mingled with a fear which was merely the shadow cast by old bugbears that, looked at fearlessly in that new light, faded and fled like ghosts at dawning. Then all surprise faded away. She recognized her proper place. She was at home.

But how to tell Mr. Granger! For she must tell him without delay. It was not an easy task. If he had suspected, perhaps she could have spoken; but he never dreamed of the change in her. If the subject had been introduced, she must have spoken; but for some reason, the "papists" were allowed to rest unscathed

in the family conversations. It was the war; it was General Sinclair, sabre in hand, riding into battle as if it were a *fête*; it was the weather, a whole month of persistent and most illogical rain, pouring down through west winds, through dry moons, through red sunsets, through every sign that should bring clear skies, Taurus being clerk of the weather, they concluded; it was when they should go back to town—"Not till the trees should resume specie payment," was Mr. Granger's professional dictum; it was any and everything but theology. And so the weeks went past, and October came, and the story was not told. But he must know before they returned to town, for then she was to be baptized.

Her uneasiness did not escape Mr. Granger, and in some measure it communicated itself to him. He perceived that she wished to say something to him, yet was afraid to speak.

"After all," he thought, "why should I wait for her to begin? She is as timid, sometimes, as much of a baby, as my Dora. I dare say it is some foolish thing, only fit to laugh at. I must help her."

It was Sunday. Mr. Southard was in town, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis and Aurelia taking their farewell walk in the pine woods, for the family were to leave the seashore that week, and Dora was in the kitchen, hushing to sleep an interesting family of kittens. Miss Hamilton walked up and down the piazza, and Mr. Granger sat just inside one of the windows, looking at her. He saw that she occasionally glanced his way, and hesitated, and that with some suspense or fear her face had grown very pale.

He leaned on the sill, as she came past, and regarded her anxiously.

"You are not looking well," he said. "I hope that nothing troubles you."

She came to him immediately, eagerly; a faint smile just touching her lips, and fading again.

"I wanted to tell you; but I was afraid," she said, speaking like one out of breath.

"I am sorry that you are afraid of me. Have I ever given you reason to be?"

Margaret could not look at him, but leaned against a pillar near the window, and averted her face.

"I was afraid only because you might think—"

She stopped.

"My dear child, what a coward you are!" he exclaimed, half laughing. "You are worse than Dora. She had not such an air of terror when she broke my precious Palissy plate. Must I apply the thumbscrew?"

She turned toward him suddenly, and with a look stopped his raillery.

"Would you be much displeased, Mr. Granger, if I should be a Catholic?" she asked; then held her breath while she awaited his reply.

His first expression was one of utter astonishment.

"But you are not in earnest!" he said, after a moment. "This is only a fancy."

"Don't believe that!" said Margaret. "I am so firmly a Catholic that I would die for the faith. It has been growing in my mind a long time; and now the work is finished. I could not go back, even to please you, Mr. Granger. I must follow my convictions."

"Certainly," he said very quietly, looking down. "No one has a right to interfere with your convictions. Do you intend to become openly a Catholic, and leave your own church for that?"

"I do not know how to believe one thing and say another," she replied. "I am to be baptized as soon as I go in town."

She seemed abrupt, almost defiant; but it was only because she was weak.

Mr. Granger drew himself up slightly.

"Since your mind is so fully made up, and your arrangements perfected, there is, of course, no more to be said about the matter. I am surprised, since I have not been led to expect anything of the sort; but I have neither the right nor the desire to control your religious opinions. Fortunately, conscience is free in this country."

"But you are displeased!" she exclaimed tremulously; for every word had fallen like ice upon her heart.

"You cannot expect me to be pleased, since I am not a Catholic," was the reply.

Margaret sighed heavily under the first pressure of her cross. "You wish me to go away?"

He looked at her in astonishment. "Certainly not! When I say that I have no right or desire to interfere in your religion, I mean that I am not to persecute you or to make any difference with you on account of it. Nothing is to be changed unless you wish it."

She had expected him to ask some explanation; but not a word more did he say. He seemed to think that the subject was disposed of.

His silence wrung her heart like the veriest indifference; but he was not indifferent. He thought, "She has done all this without confiding in me, and tells me only when she must. It is not for me to question her. What I am to know she must communicate voluntarily."

She waited a moment, then turned slowly away, went in at the door, and up-stairs to her chamber.

When they met again, Mr. Granger tried to be quite as usual. He

was even more scrupulously respectful than formerly. But she felt the chill of all that courtesy that had once been kindness. The next day she went in town, and was baptized. The sooner the better, she thought. But, if she had expected any delight or conscious change to follow the reception of the sacrament, she was disappointed. There was only that calm which follows the consciousness of being in the right way. The baptism was strictly private; no one present but the two necessary witnesses; and after it was over, she took the cars back to the country.

"Everything is peaceful," she thought, walking through the silent woods, now burning with autumn colors. "Everything is sweet," she added, as, coming in sight of the house, she saw little Dora running joyfully out to meet her.

"When you come back, I'm glad all over," said the child.

That evening Mr. Southard came home alone, and with a very grave face. "I have bad news for you," was his first greeting on entering the parlor.

Mrs. Lewis started up with a cry. Miss Hamilton sank back in her chair.

"General Sinclair is killed."

"Thank God!" exclaimed both ladies.

They thought that some accident had happened to Mr. Granger or Uncle Charles," explained Aurelia, seeing the minister's astonishment.

"Some people never know how to tell bad news!" cried Mrs. Lewis, her face still crimson with that first terrified leap of the heart. "Can't you see, Mr. Southard, that you ought to have begun by saying that our family were all well? Look at that girl! She is like a snow image. Oh! well, excuse me; but you did give me such a start. Now tell us

the whole, please. I am very sorry."

Poor Mr. Southard took his scolding with the greatest humility, but was so disconcerted by it that he could hardly finish the recital.

Mr. Granger had received a telegram from Washington, and had gone on immediately to bring the remains of his cousin home for burial. He wished them to go into town, and have the house open for the funeral. General Sinclair's wife was ill in Montreal, and could not be present. Mr. Granger had telegraphed her before starting.

They went to town the next day, and hastened to put the house in order; and on the second day Mr. Granger arrived.

It was impossible to have a private funeral. Mr. Sinclair had a host of friends, his reputation was a brilliant one, and he had died in battle. Military companies offered their escort, and the public desired to honor the dead by some demonstration. Finally, Mr. Southard opened his church, and consented to preach the sermon.

One would have thought that some public benefactor had died. The church was crowded, and crowds lined the streets through which the procession passed. Many a great and good man has died, yet received no such ovation.

A military funeral is the sublime of mourning. We may not know whose memory is thus honored, whose silence thus lamented; but those wailing strains of music touch our heart-strings as the wind sweeps the wind-harp, and tears start at the obsequies of him whose name we never heard, whose face we never looked upon. Perhaps it is that requiem music mourns not that one man is dead, but that all men must die.

Mr. Southard had felt a temporary

embarrassment as to the manner in which he should treat his subject. He could not hold the dead up as a model, for Mr. Sinclair had been an unbeliever and a man of the world. There was but one way, and that one was congenial to the speaker and welcome to the hearers. The man must be, as much as was possible, ignored in the cause.

From the moment when the minister rose in the pulpit, the spirit in which he would speak was plain to be seen. His mouth was stern, there was a steel-like flash in his eyes, and his voice was clear and ringing when he announced his text:

*"And he said to Zebee and Salmana: What manner of men were they whom you slew in Thabor? They answered: They were like thee, and one of them as the son of a king. He answered them: They were my brethren, the sons of my mother. As the Lord liveth, if you had saved them, I would not kill you. And he said to Jether his eldest son: Arise, and slay them."*

There was a pause of utter silence; then the minister extended his hands toward the open, flag-draped, flower-crowned coffin in front of the pulpit, and exclaimed, "One of them as the son of a king!"

Instantly every eye was turned on that white and silent face, and the princely form extended there, superbly beautiful as a marble god. It seemed regicide to kill such a man. After that look, scarcely one present revolted at the tone of the sermon, which echoed throughout the vengeful call, "Arise, and slay them!"

As the family sat that evening at home, trying to throw off the gloomy impressions of the day, and to talk quite as usual, the conversation, by some chance, turned on theology, and settled upon Catholicism. Mr. Granger, who had been sitting apart and silent, roused himself at that,



and tried to introduce some other topic, but without success. Miss Hamilton was mute, feeling that her time had come. If only her friend were on her side, she would not have cared so much; but he was far from her. The coldness that had arisen between them at first had increased rather than diminished. Perhaps it was partly her own fault; but it hurt her none the less.

"The papists are certainly gaining ground in this country," Mr. Southard said. "We have hard work before us. They know how to appeal to the frivolous tastes of the times, as of old they appealed to the superstitious. Their music pleases opera-goers, and their ceremonies amuse the curious. Worse than that, their sophistries deceive the romantic and the credulous."

"Oh! live and let live," interposed Mr. Granger hastily. "There are a good many roads to heaven."

"The Son of God said that there was but one," replied the minister.

"If there is but one," Mr. Granger said, rising, "he is a bold man who will say that he is right, and all the others wrong."

"Are you a Catholic, Mr. Granger?" demanded Mr. Southard with some heat.

"No," was the reply; "but some who are dear to me are Catholic."

Margaret's heart gave a bound. She breathed an aspiration. Her time had come. She was sitting alone opposite them all, and they all looked at her as she leaned forward with a slight gesture that checked further speech.

"I am a Catholic, Mr. Southard," she said. "I was baptized this week."

The minister started up with an exclamation, the others stared in astonishment; but Mr. Granger took a step and placed himself at Margaret's side.

O generous heart! She did not look at him, but she began to tremble, as the snow-wreath trembles in the sun before it quite melts away.

"You cannot mean it!" Mr. Southard found voice to say.

O joy! She wasn't afraid of him now.

"I am quite in earnest," she replied.

He leaned against the table near him, too much excited to sit, too much overcome to stand unsupported.

"You mean that you are pleased with their ceremonies, that some of their doctrines are plausible, not that you accept them all, and pay allegiance to the pope of Rome. It cannot be!"

"I honor the pope as the head of the church, and I can listen to no teacher of religion whom he does not approve," was the reply.

"My God!" muttered the minister. He stood one moment looking at her as if he saw a spectre, then turned away with drooping head, and went toward the door, staggering so that he had to put his hand out for support. To this sincere but mistaken man it was as if he had seen the pit open, and one he loved drawn into it.

The others sat silent and embarrassed, till Aurelia, bursting into tears, started up and left the room.

Margaret glanced at Mrs. Lewis, and found that she had quite recovered from her surprise.

"The programme seems to be flourish of trumpet, and *exult omnes*," the lady said. "But I mean to stand my ground. I don't find you in the least frightful. You look to me precisely as you did an hour ago, only brighter perhaps. My only fear at this instant is lest we may have to tie you up to keep you out of a convent."

"I have no thought of a convent," said Margaret.

"Oh! well, I don't see but we can get along with everything else. There's fish on Fridays, and the necessity of holding one's tongue occasionally. I think we can manage. Mr. Lewis, can you shut your mouth sufficiently to give an opinion?"

Thus called upon, Mr. Lewis found voice. "What in the world did you want to go and turn Catholic for?" he demanded angrily. "Couldn't you like 'em well enough at a distance, as I do? That's just a woman's romantic, headlong way of doing things up to the handle. You've upset your own dish completely. Nobody will marry you now."

Miss Hamilton smiled. "That is a view of the matter which I never thought to take," she said.

"But you must think of that," Mr. Lewis persisted, perfectly in earnest.

"No, thank you; I won't," she replied, rising. "I thank you all"—with downcast eyes and a little tremor in her voice—"I thank you that you are not too angry with me for what I could not help. I could not have borne—" There words failed her.

She glanced at Mr. Granger as she went out, and caught one of those heartfelt smiles which lighted his face when he was thoroughly friendly and pleased.

There was little rest for her that night. Hour after hour she heard Mr. Southard's step pacing to and fro in his chamber beneath, not ceasing till near morning. But after she went to bed, Aurelia came softly in, and, bending, put her arms around Margaret, and kissed her.

"I am sorry if I made you feel bad by going away so," she said in a voice stifled by long weeping. "But you know I was so taken by surprise. Of course we are all the same friends as ever. Good-night, dear!

Go to sleep, and don't worry about anything. Mr. Granger and aunt and uncle told me to say good-night to you for them."

"How good everybody is—God and everybody!" thought Margaret.

In the morning all appeared as usual, except that there was no Mr. Southard at the table. Luncheon-time came, and Mrs. James reported the minister to have locked his door and declined refreshment. When the dinner-bell rang, still Mr. Southard had not come down.

"If he doesn't come to dinner," Miss Hamilton thought, thoroughly vexed, "I will send him a note which will give him an appetite. This is sheer nonsense."

But as they entered the dining-room they heard his step on the stairs, and he followed them in.

Hearing him greet the others quite in his usual manner, Margaret glanced at him, and found him waiting to bow to her. He looked as if he had had a long illness.

"What! you desert your seat too?" he said, seeing her go toward the other end of the table.

"I thought you might be afraid to sit by me," she replied pettishly. Then, as he dropped his glance and colored faintly, she repented, and went back to her seat by him.

When they rose, he spoke to her aside. "May I see you in the library now, or at your convenience? I would gladly speak with you to-night."

"Now, if you please," she answered, thinking it best to have the interview over at once, since it was inevitable.

It would be worse than useless to repeat the minister's arguments. With more of patience and humility than she had expected, he asked for and listened to the story of her conversion. But his calmness deserted

him more and more as he perceived how firmly grounded was her conviction, and how hard would be the task of reclaiming her.

Polemical discussions were always irritating, but not always convincing, she insisted. She could not trust herself to engage in them, even if she were capable. She did not want to be told that such a man had been wicked, that such an abuse had existed. When treason had found a place among the apostles, it might well taint some of their successors. It mattered not; her faith was not based on any individual. Let Mr. Southard take the doctrines of the church, as she had learned them, from the church itself, and then prove them false if he could. Let him take the books that had satisfied her, and answer their arguments, theologian to theologian. With her the contest would be unequal; but she would gladly listen to his refutation, she assured him.

"What books have you read?" he asked, resting his head on his hand, disconcerted to find that, instead of being opposed to an uninstructed young woman, he was to have arrayed against him the flower of Catholic theologians.

She named them, an imposing list, at the repetition of which a slow red crept up into the minister's cheeks. Apparently the young woman was not so uninstructed as he had thought.

"Mr. Southard," she concluded, "I have no desire but to know the

truth. If you can convince me that I am wrong, I will renounce my errors as promptly as I adopted them. If you are thoroughly convinced that you are in the right way, then you ought to be fearless. But if it is too much trouble for you to study the subject, if I am not worth it, then let the matter drop."

"I will read the books, and go over their arguments with you," the minister said, looking at her keenly as if he suspected some hidden motive in her proposal.

"I am honest!" she said, hurt by his expression. "What have I to gain, if not heaven? What have I not to lose? I feel surely that our happy household will never again be the same that it has been."

"I must believe you sincere," he replied. "But I cannot imagine what should have set you, of all persons, on this track."

Miss Hamilton smiled as she rose. "It was you, sir. You should beware of the flattery of abuse."

The next morning after breakfast the minister found on his study table a pile of controversial works that the housekeeper had been instructed to leave there for him. Beside them lay a crucifix. He touched it, and it seemed to burn his fingers. He pushed it away, and it burned his heart.

"After all, it is the image of my crucified Redeemer," he said; and took it in his hand again. Looking at it a moment, his eyes filled with tears.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE LORD ANSWERED JOB OUT OF A WHIRLWIND

MR. SOUTHARD was perfectly confident in his expectation of being able to convince Miss Hamilton of her mistake. He knew her well enough to be sure that she would fearlessly acknowledge her error as soon as it should be made plain to her; and he did not doubt that the power to produce that conviction on her mind would be given him.

He would not allow that first twinge of wounded personal pride and dignity of office, with which he had seen how light she held his authority in matters of religion, to stand in the way of his endeavors. The first dignity of his office was to perform its duties. Exacting respect was secondary.

Mr. Southard had one confidant: his journal. The day the books were left on his table he wrote in it: "To-night I am to read Milner's *End of Controversy*. O my God! may I read it by the light of thy Gospel! May a ray of heavenly truth fall on each page, expose its hidden falsehood, and teach me how best to prove that falsehood to this stray lamb who

has been lured from thy fold into the den of the wolf."

Two or three days passed; the book was read, and read again; but the refutation was not ready. Mr. Southard was too honest and too manly to think that personal abuse was a proper answer to theological argument. He remembered that when St. Michael set his foot upon the neck of Satan, and chained him to the rock, he did not use infernal weapons, or walk in loathsome ways; but his sword was tempered in heaven, and there was no mire upon his sandals.

"When I fight for the Lord," the minister said, "I will use the weapons of the Lord."

He laid aside the first book, and took another. Again a few days, and yet he was not prepared to undermine his adversary.

"I am astonished at the ingenuity and subtlety of these writers," was the record he made in those days. "All the resources of minds richly endowed by nature, highly cultivated by education, and inspired by some strange infatuation for

what they call the church, have been brought to bear upon this question of polemics. How skilfully they mingle truth with falsehood! What beautiful, what touching, what sublime sentiments they drop in places where one would not go save so lured! It reminds me of my boyish days, when the scarlet blossom of a cardinal-flower would entice me down steep banks, and into dangerous waters, or some bloomy patch of ripe berries would draw my feet into a treacherous swamp. I begin to perceive the attraction which the Roman Church exercises on the unwary."

It will be perceived that Mr. Southard had the rare courtesy not to use the word "Romish." He was so much a gentleman that he could not call nicknames, not even in theological controversy.

But as his days of study lengthened into weeks, a change came over him. The obstacles in his way made him nervous, feverish, and, it must be owned, rather ill-tempered. His political opposition to Mr. Lewis was expressed with unusual asperity. He was very haughty with Miss Hamilton. He entirely absented himself from luncheon, and he sometimes dined out, rather than sit beside that smiling papist, who was doubtless triumphing over him in her heart, taking his silence for defeat. He groaned as he heard her light step pass his door every morning on her way to early Mass. That step was his *réveil*. Should he, the Gospel watchman, sleep while the foe was awake and at work?

"Why cannot truth inspire as

much ardor as error awakens?" he wrote one morning. "Why cannot we bring back the old days of faith, when God was to man a power, and not a name; when the tables of the law were stone to the touch; when he who made flood, and fire, and death was more terrific than flood, fire, or death? The author of *Ecce Homo* is right: no virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic. A cold religion is a worthless religion. O Lord! have mercy on Zion; for it is time to have mercy on it."

But angry as he was with her every morning, when Mr. Southard met Margaret coming in again from Mass, her face smiling, her cheeks red from the cold, he could but forgive her. It is hard to frown on a bright face, happiness looks so much like goodness.

Mr. Granger took notice of these early walks, Mr. Lewis alternately scowled upon and laughed at them. Mrs. Lewis and Aurelia exclaimed, How dared she go out alone before light!

The wicked people, if there were any, were all asleep, Miss Hamilton said, sitting down to breakfast with a most unromantic appetite, and a general preponderance of rose-color and sparkle in her countenance. At six o'clock on winter mornings no one was abroad but papists and policemen. It was the safest hour of the twenty-four.

"My good angel and I just go about our business, and nobody molests us," she said, with a spice of mischief; for the mention of anything peculiarly Catholic usually had the

effect of producing a blank silence, and a general elongation of visage.

"But such a magnificent spectacle as I saw this morning! I came home round the Common. The sleet-storm of last evening had left all the trees crusted with ice to the very tips of their twigs, and set an ice-mitre on every individual arrow-head of the iron fence. There were the ghosts of all the bishops from Peter down. There wasn't any sky, but only a vast crystalline distance. I took my stand on the Beacon and Charles street corner. Every other person who was so happy as to be out looked also. Then the sun came up. Park street steeple caught fire at the ball, and flamed all the way down. There was a glimmer on the topmost twigs, then the trees all over the Common were in an instant transfigured into flashing diamonds. The malls were enough to put your eyes out—nothing but glitter from end to end. It was a grand display for the frost-people. The trees will talk about it all next summer."

The winter slipped away; and Mr. Southard had not fulfilled his promise to Miss Hamilton. Neither had he relinquished his studies. Shut up with his books hour after hour and day after day, in silence and solitude, he scarcely knew how the world fared without. For him the war had suddenly dwindled. Through long and weary vigils that wore his face thin and his eyes hollow, he studied, and thought, and prayed, not the humble petition of one who places himself before God, and passively awaits an inspiration, but the impassioned and fiery petition of one who will not doubt the justice of his cause, and will not be denied. Then, leaning from the window to cool his heated eyes and head in the fresh early dawning, a peace that was half exhaustion would settle upon him.

Sleep came pitifully in those hours, and pressed on the throbbing brain too much expanded by thought, and for a little while soothed the tormented heart.

His journal bore traces of the conflict.

"I will resist the seduction! This is my time of trial; but I will conquer! In the name of God, I will yet confound the doctors of the Roman Church. O God! who didst nerve the arm of David against Goliath, strengthen thou me!"

At every step he was baffled. Catching at what appeared a mere theological weed, thinking to fling it out of his way, he found it rooted like an oak. Approaching dogmas with the expectation of cutting them down like men of straw, he was confronted by mailed giants.

He found himself among crowds and clouds of Catholic saints—shadows, he called them—that would fly from his path when he should hold up the torch of truth. But, looking in that light, he saw steadfast eyes, and shining foreheads, and palm-branches that brushed his shrinking, empty hands. And out from among them, with a look of gentle humility that smote him like a blow, and with a tremulous radiance gathering about her pure forehead, came one whom he had frowned upon, and striven to discrown. What was she saying? "All nations shall call me blessed!" Not great, not glorious, not even lovely, but *blessed*!

"Well—she—was blessed," admitted the minister.

The next moment he started out of his chair, muttered some kind of exorcism, caught his hat, and went out for a walk. Though it was mid-April, a north wind was blowing; thank heaven for that! Nothing murky about the north wind. It would soon blow away all these pes-

tilential vapors that came up from the sun-steeped lowlands of his soul; pagan places where, though his iconoclastic will had again and again gone about breaking images, no sooner did it rest than there they were again, Bacchus, and Hebe, and Diana, and the rest. Or from yet more dangerous because more deceptive regions, wide, bright solitudes of the soul, arid and dazzling, where the unobstructed sky seemed to lean upon the earth—the region of mirages, of New Jerusalems, that shone and crumbled—of sacred-seeming streams that fled from thirsty lips—of cool shadows that never were reached.

In one of these impetuous walks, Mr. Southard came across an old minister, and went into his study with him, and told him something of his difficulties. He was too well aware of his own excitement to venture on a full explanation. Moreover, there was something soothing and silencing in the look of this man, in his tranquil, rather sad expression, his noble face, and snowy hair.

The old doctor leaned back in his chair, and calmly listened while his younger brother spoke, smiling indulgently now and then at some vivid turn of expression, some flash of the eyes, some impatient gesture.

Elderly ministers were always pleased with Mr. Southard, who would ask advice and instruction of them with a docility that was almost childlike. Such respect was very pleasant to those who seemed to have fallen upon evil days, who saw the prestige of the ministry departing, to whom boys had ceased to take off their caps, to whom even women did not look up as of yore.

"My dear brother," said the doctor gently when the other had ceased speaking, "you have made a mistake in attempting this work. I tell you frankly, we can never argue down the

Catholic Church. All the old theologians know that, and avoid the contest. For perfect consistency with itself, and for wonderful complexity yet harmony of structure, the world has not seen, and will not again see its equal. It is the master-work of the arch-enemy."

"So much the more reason why we should attack it with all our might!" exclaimed the other.

"No," replied the doctor, "That does not follow. There are dangers which must be shunned, not met; and this is one. As with wine, so with Romanism, 'touch not, taste not, handle not!'"

"That might be said to the laity," Mr. Southard persisted. "But for us who teach theology, we ought to search, we ought to examine. It is essential that we know the weapons of our adversary in order to destroy them."

"Truth has many phases, and so has belief," was the quiet reply. "We begin by believing that the doctrines we hold are the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and that everything else is unmitigated falsehood. But after a while, according to the degree of candor of which we are capable, we begin to admit that every religion on earth has something reasonable to say for itself. There is a grain of good in Mohammedanism, in Brahminism, in Buddhism. We are now credibly assured that the old story of people throwing themselves under the wheels of Juggernaut is a myth. Hindu converts say that there were sometimes accidents at these religious celebrations, on account of the crowd, as we have accidents on the fourth of July; but that Juggernaut was a beneficent deity who took no pleasure in human pain, and whose attributes were a dim reflection of Christianity. I used to tell that story in perfect

good faith whenever a collection was wanted for the missionaries. I don't tell it now. At last we learn to choose what seems to us best, to present its advantages to others, but not to insist that all shall agree with us under pain of eternal loss. When I hear a man crying out violently against the purely religious opinions of others, I always set him down as a man of narrow heart and narrower head. The principal reason for my well-known hostility to Catholicism is a political one.

"The fact is, brother, God's light falling on the mind of man, is like sunlight falling on a prism. It is no longer the pure white, but is shattered into colors which each one catches according to his humor. We ministers are not like Moses coming from the mountain with the whole law in his two hands, and a dazzling face to testify for him that he had been with God, he alone. I wish we were, brother! I wish we were!"

"But faith," exclaimed the other, "is there no faith?"

"We believe in the essentials; and they are few."

"How shall we prove them?"

"As the Catholic Church proves them. She holds the whole truth tangled in the midst of her errors, like a fly in a spider's web."

Mr. Southard sat a moment, looking steadily, almost sternly, at his companion.

"Then you and I have no mission," he said. "We are not divinely called."

"Whithersoever a man goes, there is he called," said the doctor, sighing faintly. "We among the rest. We have a mission, too, and a noble one. We make people keep the Sabbath, which, without us, would fall into disuse; we remind them of their duties; we check immorality; we keep before the eyes of worldlings

the fact that there is another world than this. In short, we spend our breath in keeping alive the sacred fire on the desecrated altar of the human soul. Is that nothing?"

In speaking, the doctor lifted his head, and drew up his stately form. His voice trembled with feeling, and his eyes were full of indignant tears. His look was proud, almost defiant; yet seemed directed less against his companion, than combating some voice in his own soul. All the enthusiastic dreams of his youth, though they had long since been subdued, as he thought, by common sense and necessity, stirred in their graves at sound of the imperious questioning, at sight of the clear, searching eyes of this young visionary who fancied that in the troubled spirit of man the full orb of truth was to be reflected unblurred.

"In short," Mr. Southard said, rising to go, "you believe that the spirit of evil can propose a problem which the Holy Spirit cannot solve."

"Not so!" was the reply; "but the spirit of evil may propose a problem which the Holy Spirit may not choose to solve for us till the end of time."

## CHAPTER IX.

### NOBLESSE OBLIGE

On his way home that day, the minister met Mr. Granger, and the two stopped to look at a Vermont regiment that was marching through the city from the Maine depot to the New York depot. As they stopped, the regiment also was stopped by some obstruction in the street.

The attention of the gentlemen was presently attracted to a boy in the rank nearest them, a bright, resolute-looking lad, with a ruddy face and smiling lips. But it needed not a



very keen observer to see in that smile the pathetic bravado of a boy who had just torn himself away from home, and was struggling to hide the grief with which his heart was swelling.

"What is a boy like you in the army for?" Mr. Granger asked.

The young soldier looked up, his bright eyes bold with excitement. "When men won't go, the boys have got to go," he answered. "Do you want to take my place?"

Mr. Granger said no more.

Beside this boy stood a middle-aged man who had an uncommonly good face. He was tall, somewhat awkward, and had that look of unsophisticated manliness, honest candor, and plain common sense, which is found only in the country. One could not fancy him a dweller among masked city faces, breathing air pent in narrow streets, walking daily on pavements, and knowing no shades but those of brick and stone. His place was tramping through wild forests, not with any romantic intent, but measuring with practised eyes the trunk of some tree in which he saw what woodsmen call a "good stick," and chopping steadily at it while the chips flew about him, and above him the spreading branches shivered at every stroke; or plodding slowly through still country roads beside his slow oxen; or, in the sultry summer days, swinging the scythe through thick grass and clover, mowing them down ankle deep at his feet. He had the flavor of all that about him. Now he had to wade through other than that fragrant summer sacrifice, to break through other ranks than serried clover and Mayweed, and those strong arms of his were to lay low something greater than pine or cedar. You could see that this thought was in his mind, that he never lost sight of it, but, also, that he would not shrink.

Such men have not much to say; but in time of need they put into action the heroism which others exhale in glowing language.

This man had been looking straight before him; but at the sound of a childish voice he turned his head quickly. A little girl leaning from the curbstone was admiring the bunch of flowers on the soldier's bayonet, and stretching longing hands toward them.

The fixed look in the man's face broke up instantly. "Do you want them, little dear?" he asked.

"Oh! yes."

He lowered his rifle, removed the flowers, and gave them to the child, looking at her with a yearning, homesick smile that was more pitiful than tears. At that moment the drums began to beat. The soldier laid his bronzed hand on the happy little head, then, with trembling lips and downcast eyes, marched on, and out of sight for ever.

Mr. Granger turned abruptly away. "I feel as if I were a great lazy coward!" he exclaimed. "I can't stand this any longer!"

The minister looked at him with a startled expression; but any reply was prevented; for just then they met Mrs. Lewis coming out of a flower-store, with her hands full of Mayflowers done up in solid pink bunches, without a sign of green.

"Poor things!" she said. "The sight of them always reminds me of the massacre of the Innocents. See! they look like so many pretty little pink and white heads cut off. Massed so, without any green, they are not at all like flowers. Are we going home to dinner? My husband will be late, and we are not to wait for him. He has gone to see who is drafted in our ward."

The family had nearly finished dinner when Mr. Lewis came in. "Our

house is favored," he said immediately. "Granger, both you and I are drawn."

Mr. Granger looked up, but said nothing.

"I got my substitute on the spot," Mr. Lewis continued. "He is a decent fellow whom I can depend on. I asked him if he knew of any one for you, and he thought he could get somebody."

Mr. Granger made no reply, seemed to be occupied in waiting on his little girl who sat beside him.

"How sober he is!" thought Miss Hamilton; but did not feel troubled, his gravity was so gentle.

Dora looked up in her father's face, and laughed, half with love, half with delight. "You nice papa!" she cried, and gave his arm an enthusiastic hug.

He laid his hand on those sunny curls, as he had seen the soldier do in the street, but did not smile.

Glancing at Mr. Southard, Margaret met a look at once anxious and searching. His eyes were instantly averted, but his expression did not change. What could it mean? After dinner, he went directly to his room.

Mr. Granger sat apart in the parlor with Dora, petting her, and telling her stories. When her bed-time came, he went out with her, and was gone longer than usual. The evening was cool, and they had a fire in the grate. Mr. Lewis sat before it reading the evening paper, and the three ladies gathered in one corner, and talked in whispers.

"How sober and strange everything seems this evening!" Margaret said, shivering. "I feel cold. It isn't like spring, but like fall. Hold my hand, Aura dear. What does chill me so?"

"It is because Mr. Southard looked at you in such an odd way," Aurelia said gravely, holding Margaret's cold hand between her warm ones.

"I know what ails me," Mrs. Lew-

is said, in a tone of vexation. "It is that substitute. My husband will preach poverty for six months to come. Charles," raising her voice, "does your substitute look as if he had swallowed a new black silk dress with little ruffles all over it?"

"He has very much that expression of countenance," growled Mr. Lewis from behind his newspaper.

"O dear! And does he look as if Niagara Falls had disappeared down his throat, and as if he were just chewing up a little trip to the mountains?"

"You describe him perfectly," her husband replied with grim courtesy.

Mr. Granger came in presently, and stood awhile by one of the windows, looking out into the twilight. Then he took a seat by the fire.

It was getting too dark to read without a light, and Mr. Lewis laid his paper aside. "I will see about your substitute to-morrow," he said, "and send him up to the bank, if you wish."

"Thank you," Mr. Granger replied. "And as soon as I get a substitute, I shall immediately volunteer."

There was an exclamation from the ladies, and a sound as if one caught her breath.

Mr. Lewis stared at the speaker, turned very red, then started up, and went out of the room, banging the door behind him. A minute later, he flung open the door of Mr. Southard's study, and marched in without the least ceremony. "What is the meaning of this nonsense of Mr. Granger's volunteering?" he demanded, stammering with anger.

Mr. Southard had been sitting with a Bible open before him, and his face bowed forward and resting on it. He rose with cold stateliness at this abrupt invasion.

"Will you sit, sir?" he said, pointing to a chair.

"No, sir, I will not!" was the answer. "I want you to go down and put a stop to his making a fool of himself. I won't say a word to him; I haven't patience to."

"If Mr. Granger thinks it his duty to go, I shall not attempt to dissuade him," said the minister calmly, reseating himself. "He is his own master, and I am in no way responsible for his action in the matter."

"When a man plants an acorn, we hold him responsible for the oak," was the retort. "You have indirectly done all you could to make him ashamed of staying at home, and to make him believe that the more pieces a man gets cut into the more of a man he is. If you don't prevent his going, I shall hold you responsible for whatever may happen."

For a moment the minister's self-control deserted him, and a just perceptible curl touched his lip with scorn. "Can you see no nobler destiny for a man," he asked, "than to eat three meals a day, make money, and keep a whole skin?"

Mr. Lewis's face had been red: now his very hands blushed with anger. He opened the door to leave the room, and turned on the threshold. "Yes, sir, I can!" he replied with emphasis. "But it is not in staying at home and sending another man out to die, especially when that man may be in your way!"

Banging the door behind him, Mr. Lewis ran against his niece who was just coming up-stairs. She looked terrified. She had overheard her uncle's parting speech.

"Oh! how could you!" she exclaimed. "Aunt was afraid that you were going to say something to Mr. Southard, and she sent me to beg you to come down. How could you, uncle?"

"I could a good deal easier than I couldn't," he replied. "Come into

the chamber here and talk to me. I don't want to be left alone a minute. I shan't go down-stairs again to-night; and I would advise you and your aunt to get out of the way, and give Miss Hamilton a chance to talk or cry a little common sense into Mr. Granger."

Meantime Mr. Granger had been explaining somewhat to the two ladies left with him, and exonerating Mr. Southard from all responsibility.

"I know that Mr. Lewis will blame him," he said; "but that is unjust to both of us. It is paying me a very poor compliment to say that in such a matter I would allow another person to think for me."

"You must remember that my husband's excitement will be in proportion to his regard for you," Mrs. Lewis said, with tears in her eyes. "He has a rough way of showing affection; but he is fonder of you than of any other man in the world; and I'm sure we all—" Here her voice failed.

Mr. Granger turned hastily toward her as she got up to go out. "I don't forget that," he said. "I know he thinks a good deal of me, and so do I of him. We shan't quarrel. Don't be afraid. I found out long ago that he has a kind and true heart under that rough manner."

"I'm going to bring him back," Mrs. Lewis said, and went out, wiping her eyes.

Mr. Granger had not dared to look at Miss Hamilton, or address her directly. After having spoken, the thought had first occurred to him that he should have been less abrupt in announcing his intention to her. She might be expected to feel his departure more keenly than the others would. He waited a moment to see if she would speak. She sat perfectly quiet in the dim light, her cheek supported by her hand, her elbow on the

arm of her chair, and her eyes fixed on the fire.

There is an involuntary calmness with which we sometimes receive the most terrible news, and which even an acute observer would take for perfect indifference, but which, though not assumed, is utterly deceptive. Perhaps it is incredulity; perhaps the sudden blow stuns. Whatever it may be, no human self-control can equal it. Fortunately, this phenomenon worked now for Miss Hamilton. She would scarcely have forgiven herself or Mr. Granger if she had lost her self-possession.

"Nothing will be changed here," he said presently, slightly embarrassed by the continued silence. "All will go on just as it has. In case of any uncertainty, when it would take too long to hear from me, you can consult Mr. Barton, who is my lawyer. He knows all my wishes and intentions. Of course you have full authority regarding Dora. I feel quite at ease in leaving her to you."

So Mr. Barton had known all about it, and so had Mr. Southard, and others, perhaps. Miss Hamilton recollected herself with an effort. She was in Mr. Granger's employment; he was, in some sort, her patron. She had made the mistake of thinking that they were friends. But that is not friendship where the confidence is all on one side.

"I shall try to do my duty by Dora," she said rather coldly. "But what does 'full authority' mean?"

"She is too young to learn theology," he replied; "but everything else is free. I spoke lest some one might interfere during my absence, though that isn't likely."

Margaret waited a moment, then said, "Dora tells me that you hear her say the Our Father every night and morning. Of course, I shall hear it when you are gone. If you

are willing, I would like to teach her to bless herself before praying, and to say a little prayer to the Mother of Christ for your safety. I won't make her say 'Mother of God.'"

Mr. Granger was touched. "That cannot hurt her nor me," he said. "Do as you please."

Presently he spoke again, "I received yesterday a letter which my cousin Sinclair wrote me the day before he was killed. It was given to a soldier who was taken prisoner, and is only just exchanged. That letter surprised and affected me; and if I had a lingering doubt as to my own course, it was dispelled then. He was driving to the steamer, it seems, when he met the Seventh Regiment marching through Broadway to take the cars south. As they marched, they sang 'Glory Hallelujah' with a sound like a torrent. He was electrified. There he was on the point of going abroad for distraction when here at home was the centre toward which the eyes of the whole civilized world were turned. He blushed for the slothful ease and aimlessness of his life. Here was manly employment. He took no thought for the causes of the war, since he was not responsible for them; and circumstances had decided which side he was to take. To him it was a great gymnasium in which men enervated by wealth, or cramped by petty aims, were to wake up their nobler powers, string anew their courage, 'ventilate their souls,' as he expressed it, and, finding what they were themselves capable of achieving, take back thus their faith in others. When he saw those gallant fellows march singing off to battle, the dusty, stale old life broke open for him, and a new golden age bloomed out. He did not feel that they were rejoicing over the shedding of blood, or the winning of victories; but they

sang their emancipation from littleness, they sang because they caught breath of a higher air, they sang because they had found out that their souls were greater than their bodies. Then first it seemed credible to him that the Son of God took flesh and died for man; for then he first perceived that man at his best is a glorious creature. 'I am happy,' he added. 'It is like getting out of a close room into the fresh air. I am going through a picture-gallery more magnificent than any in the old world, and listening to strains of an epic grander than Homer's. I feel as if I were just made new.'

This recital was to Margaret like some reviving essence to a fainting person. Her heart, drooping inward on itself, expanded again.

"If I knew him now!" she said. "If he would come to me now!"

"Here is something that will interest you," Mr. Granger added; "I will read it from the letter."

He lighted the gas and read: "The last time I was in Washington, I went to see Lieut. A——, who is laid up in one of the hospitals in charge of the Sisters of Charity. Everything was quiet and orderly. A. was enthusiastic about the sisters, calls them doves of peace and charity, says their bonnets look like wings of great white birds. I talked with one of them when I went out.

"How can you, who are the children of peace, bear to come among us who are the sons of strife?" I asked.

"Where can the children of peace more fitly go than among the sons of strife?" she returned.

"But we must seem to you cruel, and unworthy of gentle ministrations," I said. "You must think that we deserve our pains."

"A swift, almost childlike smile just touched her lips, 'We cannot be

everything,' she replied. 'Each has his place; and the judgment-seat belongs to God. I am only the nurse.'

"You must look upon war as the carnival of Satan," I said.

"God permits it," she replied tranquilly. "And the thought has occurred to me that it may be sometimes a preparation for religion. In the army men learn to suffer, and to sacrifice, and to be patient and obedient—lessons which perhaps they would not learn in any humbler school. And having acquired these virtues, they may use them in nobler ways, perhaps in preventing war. But," she added hastily, "it is not for me to explain the designs of the Almighty. Here is my mission!"

"She bowed, and glided away. A minute later I saw her raising the head of a dying soldier, and as his eyes grew dim, repeating for him, 'Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!'

"As I went away, I said to myself, 'I have seen one wiser than Solomon!'"

As Mr. Granger finished reading, the door opened, and Mr. Southard came in, but stopped on seeing the two alone.

"I am glad you have come," Miss Hamilton said quickly, "I want you to assure Mr. Granger that, though we shall miss him, and be anxious about him, we will not let our weakness stand in the way of his strength."

No matter if she had been slighted! No matter if the confidence had been all on one side!

"Will you not bid me also God-speed?" Mr. Southard asked.

"You?"

"I have asked, and am likely to receive, a year's leave of absence from my congregation," he said. "I do not know how it will be; but I hope to go in the same regiment with Mr. Granger."

"Well," Margaret sighed as she climbed wearily up-stairs, "I have had one happy year. But could I have dreamed that Maurice Sinclair would be the one to reprove my weakness at such a time?"

## CHAPTER X.

## A BROKEN CIRCLE.

Having made up his mind to go, Mr. Granger lost no time. He who had been the most leisurely of men, whose composure and deliberateness of manner had often given him the appearance of haughtiness, was now possessed by a spirit of ceaseless activity. His slow and dignified step became prompt, he spoke more quickly, his misty eyes cleared up, and a color glowed in his swarthy cheeks.

There was no more lounging on a sofa, and reading; no more theatre nor concert; no more lingering in picture-galleries, and looking about with that fastidious, dissatisfied expression of his till his eyes lit sparkling on something that pleased him; no more dreaming along, with a cigar in his mouth, under the trees at twilight. He was busy, happy, and full of life.

It did not take long to complete his arrangements. Like Madame Swetchine, he thought those obstacles trifling which were not insurmountable.

The family found themselves infected by his cheerfulness. Mr. Lewis's lugubrious visions of wooden arms and legs, and patches over the eye, he swept away with a laugh. The wistful glances, often dim with tears, with which the ladies looked at him, following his every step, listening to his every word, he chid more gently, and also more earnestly.

"How women can weaken men with

a tear or a glance!" he said. "It will be hard for me to leave you. I love you all. I have been very happy here, and hope to be as happy here again. But I must go. I can't see poor men leaving their families, and boys torn away from their homes, and not go. I should never again respect myself if I staid at home. But there is something else. The feeling that draws me is something that I cannot explain. It is irresistible. The breeze has caught me, and I must move. Margaret has a smile for me, I know. It's in her. She comes of a Spartan stock."

Could she disappoint his expectation? No. Henceforth, at whatever cost to her, he should see no sign of weakness. But, oh! she thought, sometimes those who stay at home fight harder battles than those who go.

"And my little girl," said the father. "She wants me to have beautiful gold straps on my shoulders, and splendid large gilt buttons on my coat."

Dora was enchanted. Soldiers were to her the most magnificent of beings. "Yes, papa! And little gold cuffs to your sleeves, and stripes on your pantaloons."

"Precisely. And a sword, and a belt, and spurs at my heels, and a feather in my hat. Papa will be as fine as a play-actor. And in order to have all these things, my pet is willing that I should go away awhile?"

The child said nothing, but looked steadily at her father. The smile still lingered on her lips, but large, slow tears were filling her eyes.

"Not for a very great while," he added. "You know we must pay in some way for all we get. You pay money for your dresses, and study for your education, and for these shoulder-straps of mine you must pay by letting me go a little while."

The child struggled hard to keep down the swelling in her throat, and dropped her eyes to hide the tears in them.

"I guess, papa," she said, nervously twisting his watch-chain as she leaned against him, "I guess it's no matter about the shoulder-straps. I'd rather have you without 'em."

He tried to laugh. "And the feather, and the sash, and the sword, and the spurs, do you forget them?"

She broke down completely at that. "I don't want 'em; I'd rather have you than everything else in the world!"

"Even than stripes on my pantaloons?"

"O papa!" she sobbed, "what makes you laugh at me when I'm most dead?"

"Margaret," exclaimed Mr. Granger, "don't let this child miss me!"

"Not if I can help it," she replied.

He was to do staff duty till the bloom of his ignorance should be rubbed off, Mr. Granger said. One whose sole idea of a *wheel* was that it was something round with spokes in it, whose only *forward* had been learned of the dancing-master, and who knew no worse *charge* than the grocer's—such a person could scarcely be expected to lead men in battle array. He was going down there to get some of the little boys to teach him drill.

It was impossible to resist his delightful humor. Even Mr. Lewis relented.

"If ever the doing of a thing could be forgiven for the sake of the manner in which it is done," he said, "then I could forgive you. But I can't promise to turn back all at once from bonny-clabber to new milk."

"Oh! scold away," was the laughing reply. "I begin to think that there is a certain pleasure in being

abused in a discriminating manner."

"Your going to Fortress Monroe helps to reconcile me," Mr. Lewis continued. "It's a pleasant place, and a strong place. My wife calls it Fortissimo. I supposed that you would insist on going straight to the front to do picket-duty, or post yourself in a tree as a sharpshooter. I'm glad to see that you've got a little ballast left aboard. I wish that Mr. Southard were to be with you, instead of going to New Orleans at this time of year. I spent a year at New Orleans when I was a young man, and I know all about it. It isn't a city, it's a deposit. You have to hold on with hands and feet to keep from being melted away by the heat, or washed away by the water."

"O the oleanders!" sighed Mrs. Lewis in an ecstasy.

Almost before they knew, Mr. Granger was gone. They had heard his last pleasant word, met his last smile, and seen the carriage that bore him away disappear down the street. Both Mr. Southard and Mr. Lewis accompanied him as far as New York.

When they had seen him off, the three ladies returned to the parlor, and the servants went sorrowfully back to their places. The neighbors who waved him away left their windows, and the friends grouped on the steps and the walk went each his way.

Dora, repulsed by Miss Hamilton, went to Aurelia for comfort. Margaret walked uneasily about the room, putting books in their places, pushing intrusive vine-leaves out the windows, arranging and rearranging the curtains. Then she seated herself by a table, and began cutting the leaves of a new magazine.

Presently Mrs. Lewis approached her, and after leaning on the arm of

her chair a moment without being noticed, touched her on the shoulder.

"Margaret," she said, "why will you be so terribly proud? I think you might be willing to shed tears when Aurelia and I do. Why shouldn't you grieve over the absence of your friend? He is a kind and true friend to you."

Aurelia rose quietly, and led Dora from the room.

Margaret persisted a moment longer in her silence and her leaf-cutting. But the book and the knife shook in her hand, and presently dropped from her grasp. Turning impulsively, she hid her face in that kind bosom, and sobbed without control.

"He will soon come back, I am sure of it," Mrs. Lewis said soothingly. "And you know we shall hear from him constantly. We all feel bad. Mr. Lewis choked up whenever he thought of it, and the only way he had of turning off his emotion was in scolding. I dare say his last word to Mr. Granger will be an abusive one. And you are almost as bad."

"I can't bear to be misunderstood, and watched, and commented on," Margaret said, trying to control herself. "Most people seem to think hate more respectable than affection, and if they see that you care about a person, they sneer."

"I know all about it, dear," Mrs. Lewis said. "You can't tell me anything new about meanness and malice. I have suffered too much from them in my life. But we are friends, real friends, here. We respect each other's reserve. But too much reserve is not good nor wholesome."

Margaret looked up, and wiped her tears away. "How you help me!" she said. "I don't feel very bad now," with a faint smile. "It is suppression that kills me. If we could say just what we think and feel, and act with perfect openness, how

good it would be! Looking back, my life seems to me a cemetery of stifled emotions. My heart is full of their bones and ashes. It's an awful weight! You are very good, Mrs. Lewis. You do beautiful things sometimes. I grow fonder of you every day. By and by," smiling again, "I shall not be able to do without you. And now, that poor child! I must go to her. Wasn't I cruel to put her away? But it is very hard to have to comfort others when you are yourself in need of comfort."

The next day the two gentlemen came home with the last news of Mr. Granger, and they spent the evening more cheerfully than they could have expected. Mr. Lewis had apologized for his rudeness to the minister, and had begun to perceive that Mr. Southard had, as he said, some grit in him. So they were all harmonious enough.

"Mr. Granger's generosity of disposition would lead him to danger unnecessarily, if he were not warned," Mr. Southard said, as they sat together that evening. "I talked to him very plainly about it. There is sometimes an unconscious selfishness under those impulses. Exulting in the sense of their own fearlessness, men put themselves in peril, without thinking what others may suffer in their loss, and that the real good to be attained does not, perhaps, counterbalance the evil done. All that is accomplished is a generous deed."

"It is something to accomplish a generous deed," said Miss Hamilton. "I own, I have not the highest admiration for that 'rascally virtue' of discretion."

"But when the real cost of that 'sublime indiscretion' falls on some other than the hero, then I object to it," said the minister firmly. "And Mr. Granger agreed with me."

There are times when to hear those dear to us praised is painful. It op-



presses the heart, by placing the beloved object too far above us. But a gentle blame, which hints at no serious fault, while it does not wound our feelings, soothes our sense of unworthiness, and, without lowering the friend, brings him within our reach. Listening to such gentle censure, we get a comfortable human feeling toward one whom we were, perhaps, in danger of apotheosizing.

Speaking of the much that they would hear from these soldier friends of theirs, both Margaret and Mr. Southard urged Mrs. Lewis to resume her long unused pen. It seemed that every one who had the talent to do it ought to preserve thus some of the many incidents of the war. But she was resolute in refusal.

"Of writing many books there is no end," she said. "And I have a terrible vision of a coming deluge of war-literature. Everybody will write, soldiers, nurses, chaplains, (all but you, Mr. Southard!) philanthropists, novelists, rhymsters—all will write without mercy. The dilemma of the old rhyme will seem to be on the point of realization:

'If all the earth were paper,  
And all the sea were ink,  
And all the trees were bread and cheese,  
What should we do for drink?'

"No, don't ask me to join in that rout. Besides, no one but a scribbler knows a scribbler's afflictions. No 'Heavenly Goddess' has yet sung those direful woes. First, there is the printer. You spend all your powers on a certain passage which is to immortalize you, and under his hands, by the addition, or the abstraction, or the changing of a word, that passage has taken the one step more which carries it from the sublime to the ridiculous. Put in a fine bit of color; he changes your amber to amber, and the picture is spoilt. Refer to the well-known fact

that Washington Allston put a great deal of character into the hands and feet he painted, and this fell patriot drops the Allston, and gives the credit to the father of his country. Then there are your dear friends. They know all your virtues, so their sole effort is now to find out your defects. It won't do to praise you, lest you should become vain; so, with a noble regard for your truest good, they dissect your writings before your eyes, and prove clearly their utter worthlessness. Then, there are your gushing acquaintances who want you to write about them, and tell you their histories, insisting that they shall be put into print. As if you should carry cherry-stones to a cherry-tree, and say, Here, grow cherries round these! If you should answer ever so humbly, Thank you! but I grow stones to my own cherries, such as they are, people would be disgusted. Of course, if I had a great genius, it would scorch up all these little annoyances. But I have only a pretty talent. Perhaps the worst is, that they will apply your characters. When I was a girl, I wrote a rhymed story, and everybody pointed out the hero. I stared, I be-thought myself, I re-read my romance. Imagine my horror when I found that the description fitted the man perfectly, even to the wart on his nose. Then, not long ago, I wrote a little idyl addressed to my first love, and my husband came home with the face of an Othello. You know you did, Charles. The fact was, I never had a first love!"

Mr. Lewis laughed. "And she twitted me with Diana. Diana was a tall, superb, serene woman whom I got acquainted with in Washington, before I was married. I admired her excessively. I didn't know that she was a goose. I would talk, and she would listen, and smile at all my jokes; and I thought that she was

very witty. I spoke of books, and she smiled and said 'Yes!' and I was sure that she was a well-read person. I ranted about music, and she smiled and said 'Yes!' and I was positive that she was a fine musician. Presently I began to grow bashful in the society of such a superior woman. I couldn't talk, so she had to. Well, at first I admired her simplicity, then I stared at her simplicity. And at last I saw that there was

'No end to all she didn't know.'

"One day I'd been there, up in the parlor, and when I left, she went down to the door with me. There was a large hat on the entry-table, and we heard a man's voice in the sitting-room.

"'Who's talking with pa?' she asked of a servant.

"'Daniel Webster, miss,' was the answer.

"Daniel Webster was my hero. If our hats had been of the same size, I would have swapped fervently, though mine was new, and Daniel's a little shabby. I remembered what somebody had said of Samuel Johnson; and pointing to the table, I exclaimed with enthusiasm, 'That hat covers a kingdom!'

"Diana looked at it with a mild, idiotic perplexity, and stretched her long neck to see on the other side. 'Hat covers a kingdom,' she repeated vaguely to herself, as if it were a conundrum.

"'When it's on his head!' I cried out in a rage.

"'Oh!' she said, and smiled, but without a particle of speculation in her eyes.

"I bounced out of the house, and I never went to see Diana again. Shortly after, I met that little woman, and I married her because she is smart."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE MOUNTAINS WHENCE HELP COMETH.

Mr. Granger was one of those persons whom we miss more than we expect to, their influence is so quiet, their stability has so little of hardness. As has been beautifully said, such characters are "like the water-lily, fixed yet floating." We do not know how much we rest on them till the support is withdrawn.

They heard from him constantly, the letters being directed to Mr. Lewis, but intended for all the family.

Evidently his good spirits had not deserted him. Never before had he been so much alive, he wrote. The excitement, the uncertainty, the very restraints which reminded of power, and of great interests at stake, all kept his thoughts in a brisk circulation, and threw the bile off his mind.

Miss Dora had, however, her separate correspondence, letters directed to herself, which Miss Hamilton read to her, and answered from her dictation.

In those days the child learned a new prayer: "O Mother in heaven, take pity on me who have no mother on earth, and whose father has gone to the wars. Watch over him, that I may not be left an orphan. Pray for him, and for me, and for whoever loves us best. Do not forget me, O Mother! for if you do, my heart will break."

"Who is it that loves us best?" the child asked the first time she said this prayer.

"I do not know," was the reply. "We can never be sure who loves us best. But God knows, and the good Mother can find out."

"I thought it was you," said Dora.

Margaret's voice sank to a whisper. "Perhaps it is, dear."

In a few weeks Mr. Southard also left them, not cheerfully, but with a gloom which he took no pains to conceal.

And the few weeks grew to many weeks, and months multiplied. The summer was gone, and the autumn was gone, and winter melted like a snow-flake on the mantle of time. When our eyes are fixed in anxious longing on some future day, the intermediate days slip through our fingers like sands through an hour-glass, and keep no trace of their passage.

If, when the spring campaign opened, and both the absent ones were in active service, our friends watched with some sinking of the heart for news, it was no more than happened in tens of thousands of other homes. Heart-sickness was by no means a rare disease in those days.

The soldier in charge of the soldiers' news-room on Kneeland street became very much interested in one of the few visitors who used to go there that summer. Nearly every day, surely every day when there had been a battle, a pale-faced young lady would open the door, enter quickly, and without looking to right or left go directly to the frames that held the lists of killed and wounded, and read them through from end to end. The soldier got to have an anxious feeling about this lady. Unnoticed by her, he watched her face while she read, and hushed his breath till he saw that terrible look go out of her eyes. The lists finished, she would pull her veil down, sigh wearily, and go out as quietly as she had entered.

"When she finds the name she is looking for, I shall see her drop," he thought.

But Margaret did not drop, though often enough she was in danger of it, as her eyes fell on some blurred name, or some name very like the one she dreaded to see.

It was too wearing. Both flesh and spirit were sinking under this constant strain. Where was the help that religion was to give her? Leave everything to God, trust all to him, she was told. But how? Her thoughts were clenched in these interests; and, in spite of faith, it seemed as though, if she should let go her hold, they would fall. She found that her religion was only of the surface. It had grown in the sunshine, and was not rooted against the storm. She tried to put into practice the precepts she listened to, but the daily distractions of life constantly neutralized her efforts. There was but one way, and for the first time Margaret made a retreat.

The place selected was a convent a little out of the city.

Here in this secluded asylum was all that her soul needed for its restoring; quiet, leisure, the society of those whose lives are devoted to God, and, to crown all, the presence of the blessed sacrament of the altar.

One feels very near heaven when one hears only praying voices, sees only happy, peaceful faces, is looked upon only by kind eyes, and can at any hour go before the altar, alone, undisturbed by those distractions which constantly environ our ordinary worship. How still we become in that presence how our little troubles and sorrows exhale, as mists lift from the rivers at sunrise, and leave all clear and bright! How cramped and feverish all our past life has been! Everything settles into its true place. Sorrow and death lose their sting. We are safe, for we partake of the omnipotence of God. To think that the same roof that shelters our heads when we lie down to sleep shelters also the sacred head of the Son of God—that drives every other thought from the mind. It is marvellous, it seems incredible, and yet the wonder

if it is lost in the sweetness. The moonlight coming in at the window lies white and silent on the bare white floor. You rise to kiss that luminous spot, for just beneath is the altar. Peace rises to exultation, for you perceive more and more that the Father holds us all in his hands, those near and those afar, and that we have but to lift our eyes, and we shall behold the mountains whence help cometh. We want to run out and tell everybody. It seems as if we have just discovered all this, and that no one ever knew it before. We forget that we are sinners. It isn't much matter about us any way. We will think of that afterward. We will make acts of contrition when we get away from here. Now we can make only acts of adoration and of joy.

The superior of the convent directed Margaret's retreat, and on the last morning of it she and all the nuns received communion, and there was the benediction after mass.

The others had gone out, but Margaret still lingered before the altar. Out in the early sunshine, the trees rustled softly, and the breeze waved the curtains of the chapel windows. Occasionally, one of the nuns would come to the door, look in, and go away again smiling, though Miss Hamilton's breakfast was spoiling over the fire, and there was a gentleman waiting in the parlor for her.

"She is in the chapel at her devotions," the sister had told him.

"Don't disturb her on any account," he had answered. "There is no haste."

Margaret was not praying, was not thinking; her soul was silent, lost in God, like a star in the day.

Presently she came out, and, meeting one of the nuns in the hall, embraced her tenderly. "Sister," she said, "this is the most beautiful world that ever was made."

The gentleman had been waiting some time when he heard a step, and in the door there stood a slight, black-robed lady with a veil thrown over her head, a bright face, and a smell of incense lingering about her. She lifted both hands when she saw him.

"My cup runneth over!"

"You are not a nun?" asked Mr. Granger.

"You're not an apparition," she returned. "Oh! welcome!"

"And now," he said, delighted to see her so happy, "if you are ready, we will go home. I have only a few days' furlough, and I want to make the most of it."

Margaret went to take a hasty leave of the nuns, and also to step into the chapel for one moment.

Then she went out from under that happy portal, and down the steps to the carriage that was waiting for them. One of the sisters stood in the door looking after her, and others here and there in the grounds looked up with a pleasant word of farewell as she passed. She stooped to gather from the lower terrace a humble souvenir, two or three grass-blades and a clover-leaf, then stepped into the carriage. As they drove slowly down the avenue, she looked up into the overhanging branches and repeated:

"Above him the boughs of the hemlock trees  
Waved, and made the sign of the cross,  
And whispered their Benedicite."

The family were in raptures over Mr. Granger's return. They could not look at him enough, listen to him enough, do enough for him.

"And how nice you look in your uniform!" said Margaret, feeling as if she were about six years old.

"And how nice you look in anything!" he retorted, at which they all laughed. It took but little to make them laugh in those days.

Mr. Granger, on his part, was as

nierry as a boy. He was full of adventures to tell them, glad to be at home, happy in their confidence and affection, and hopeful of the future.

Margaret could scarcely believe her own happiness. She would turn away, shut her eyes, and think, "I have imagined it all. He is hundreds of miles away; I do not know whether he is sick or well. He may be in peril. He may be dead. O my friend! come home, come home! Are we never to see you again?"

Then, when she had succeeded in tormenting herself sufficiently, when her heart was sinking, and her eyes overflowing with tears, she would turn quickly, trembling between dream and reality, and see him there alive and well, and at home.

"Oh! there he is, thank God!"

And so every day she renewed in her vivid imagination the pain of his absence and the delight of his return, till too soon the day came when she no longer dared to play such tricks with herself, for he was again gone out of their sight.

But the lessons of the retreat were not forgotten, and every morning brought refreshment.

## CHAPTER XII.

### SO AS BY FIRE.

WHEN spring came again, the letters from Mr. Granger were less frequent, and, as weather and work grew warmer, the family had to content themselves with a few lines at irregular and sometimes long intervals.

They were not to be anxious, he wrote, even if they should not hear from him for several weeks. As the newspapers and the speech-makers had it, we were making history every day, and he must write his little paragraph with the rest. It took both hands to wield the pen, and he must have a care to make no blots. Which was a roundabout way of saying that his military duties required all his time. They must remember that "no news is good news," and try to possess their souls in patience.

On his next furlough he would  
\*Shoulder his crutch, and tell how fields were won,"

or lost; but till then a hasty scrawl must suffice. He thought of them whenever he lay down to rest; and

sometimes, when he was in the midst of the hurry and noise of battle, he would catch a flitting vision of the peaceful fireside where friends sat and thought of him. That home was to him like the headland beacon to the mariner far away on the rough horizon, and threw its point of tender light on every dark event that surged about him.

"I shall be there before long. Meantime, good-by, and don't worry."

From Mr. Southard they had heard less frequently, and less at length. His monthly letters to his congregation were usually accompanied by a few lines addressed to Mr. or Mrs. Lewis, telling them in rather formal fashion where he was, and as little as possible of what he was doing. At present, the regiment of which he was chaplain still had their quarters at New Orleans.

"I am afraid he thinks that we don't care much to hear from him," Margaret said, the three ladies sitting together, and talking the matter over. "Suppose we all write just as freely as we do to Mr. Granger? We can tell him all the little household events, and how his chair and his place at the table are still called his, and kept for him. I think he would be pleased, don't you, Aura?"

"I do. It isn't a wonder that he writes formally to us when he gets such ceremonious answers."

"To complain of cold replies to cold letters is like the wolf accusing the lamb of muddying the brook," retorted Mrs. Lewis. "I shall waste none of my sweetness on the desert air, and you will be a pair of simpletons if you do. We might expend ourselves in those gushing epistles to him, and after a month or two we should probably get about three lines apiece in return, each line cooler than the last, and not an intimation that he wasn't bored."

"But I think he would be pleased," repeated Margaret doubtfully, beginning to waver.

"What right or reason have you to think so when he never says that he is?" Mrs. Lewis persisted. "For my part, I think that friendship is worthy of acknowledgment from king or kaiser—that is, if he wants it; and if

Mr. Southard isn't an iceberg, then he is a very selfish and arrogant man, that's all. You may do as you like. But I shall never again try to get a sunbeam out of that cucumber. I have spoken."

The entrance of Mr. Lewis put an end to their discussion. He came in with a very cross face.

"Here I've got to start for Baltimore, with the thermometer at eighty degrees, and the Confederates swarming up the Shenandoah by tens of thousands, and ready to pounce on anybody south of New York! 'Why have I got to go?' Why, my agent is on the point of absconding with the rents, and the insurance policies on my houses are out, and I can't renew them in Boston or New York for love or money; and if things are not seen to there, we shall be beggars. You needn't laugh, madam! It's no joke. I've just seen a man straight from Baltimore, and he says thatascal is all but ready to start on a European tour with my money in his pocket. I shall get a sunstroke, or have an apoplexy; I know I shall."

"A cabbage-leaf in your hat might prevent the sunstroke," his wife said serenely. "As to the apoplexy, I am not so safe about that, if you keep on at this rate. When do you start?"

"To-night; and now it is two o'clock. The rails may be ripped up at any hour. You see now, Mrs. Lewis, the disadvantage of living in one town and having your property in another. You would come to Boston. Nothing else would suit you. And the consequence is, that I've got to go posting down to Baltimore in July, to collect my rents."

Mrs. Lewis laughed merrily.

"The woman whom thou gavest me—that's the way, from Adam down. Who would think, girls, that this is the very first intimation I ever

had that Mr. Lewis would rather live in Baltimore than Boston! But, bless me! I must see to his valise, and have an early dinner. As for the raid panic, I will risk you. I don't believe there's much the matter."

Margaret had been looking steadily at Mr. Lewis ever since he began speaking. She said not a word while the others exclaimed and questioned, and finally went out to prepare for his journey; but some sharp work was going on in her mind, an electric crystallization of vague and floating impressions, impulses, and thoughts into resolve.

It had been weeks since they heard from Mr. Granger. She had not been very much troubled about it—had, indeed, wondered that she felt so little anxiety; but her quietude was by no means indifference or security. She could not have defined her own feelings. For the last week she had not uttered his name, had shrunk with an unaccountable reluctance from doing so, and, worse yet, had found it impossible to pray for him.

Her other prayers she said as usual; but when she would have prayed for his safe return, the words died upon her lips. She was neither excited nor distressed; she was, perhaps, more calm than usual. Her hands were folded, her face upraised, she had placed herself in the presence of God; but if a hand had been laid upon her lips she could not have been more mute. A physical weakness seemed to deprive her of the power of speech. This was not once, but again, and yet again.

Margaret had the most absolute faith in the power of prayer. She believed that we may sometimes obtain what we had better not have, God giving for his word's sake to those who will not be denied, but chastening the petitioner for his lack

of submission by means of the very gift he grants. She had said to herself, "If a sword were raised to strike one I love, it could not fall while I prayed. He has promised, and I believe."

But now, if the sword hung there indeed, she could utter no word to stay its falling. She felt herself forbidden, bound by a restraint she could not throw off.

"Well, Margaret," Mr. Lewis said at length, "what are you thinking of? You look as if your brain were a galvanic battery in full operation, sending messages in every direction at once. The sparks have been coming out of your eyes for the last five minutes."

The crystallizing process was over, and her resolution lay there in her mind as bright and hard as though it were the work of years.

"I'm going to Washington," she said. "I have been thinking of it this week. I will go with you to-night, if you please."

Of course there were wonderments, and questions, and objections. According to all the canons of propriety, it was highly improper for a lady to go South under the existing state of things, unless there were bitter need. It was warm, and it was hard travelling night and day, as he would have to do. He would like to have her company, of course, but he didn't see—

"No matter about your seeing," interrupted Miss Hamilton, rising. "If you won't have me with you, I'll go alone. Please don't say any more. Cannot you understand, Mr. Lewis, that there are times when trivial objections and opposition may be very irritating? We will not discuss canons of propriety just now. I have something of more consequence to attend to."

"Well, don't be cross," he said

good-naturedly. "I won't say another word. If you can stand the journey, I shall be glad to have you go. But you will have to be quicker in getting your traps ready than my wife and Aurelia ever are."

"I can be ready in fifteen minutes to go anywhere," was the reply. "Now I will go tell Mrs. Lewis."

Mrs. Lewis saw at a glance that opposition was useless. Moreover, she was one of those persons who can allow for exceptional cases, and distinguish between rashness and inspiration.

"I know it seems odd," Margaret said to her; "but I must go. I feel impelled. I would go if I had to walk. You will be good, and take my part, won't you? Don't tell anybody where I have gone—nobody has any right to know—and take care of my little Dora. I'm going up to the State House now, but will be back by the time dinner is ready."

"I wouldn't venture to stop her if I could," Mrs. Lewis said. "Margaret is not given to flying off on tangents, and this start may mean something. She has perception at every pore of her."

In the messenger's room at the State House a score of persons were in waiting.

"I would like to see the governor a few minutes," Margaret said:

"You will have to wait your turn, ma'am," answered a very authoritative individual. "The gov'nor's tremendously busy—overwhelmed with work—hasn't had time to get his dinner yet. Just sit down and wait, and I will let him know as soon as there is a chance. If you tell me your business, I might mention it to him."

"Thank you! Which is his room?"

He pointed to a door. "But you can't go in now. I'll tell him presently, if you give me your name."

With the most sublime disregard for

formalities, Miss Hamilton walked straight toward the door indicated.

"But I tell you you can't go in there," said the messenger angrily, attempting to stop her.

For answer, she opened the door, and walked into the room where the governor sat at a table, with a secretary at each side of him. He looked up with a frown on seeing a visitor enter unannounced, but rose immediately as he recognized her.

"That's right. I'm glad you did not wait," he said. Then as she glanced at his companions, added, "Come in here," and led her through a small ante-room where two young ladies sat writing, and into the vacant council-chamber.

"I will detain you but a minute," she said hastily. "I am going to start for Washington to-night, and I want to visit the hospitals there. Will you give me a letter to some one who will get me permission? I am not sure that I shall find an acquaintance in the city at this season, except the family to whose house I shall go, and they are people of no influence. Besides, I do not wish to have any delay."

"Certainly; with pleasure! I will give you letters that will take you through everything without a question. But what in the world are you going there now for? It is hardly safe. My autograph will stand a pretty good chance of falling into the hands of Mosby."

"I am uneasy about Mr. Granger," she replied directly. "We haven't heard from him for weeks, and I must know if there is anything the matter. He has been a good friend to me. He saved my life once, and I owe him everything. We are only friends, you know; but that word means something with me. Do you think there is any impropriety in my

going? Mr. Lewis goes with me as far as Baltimore."

"Not the least impropriety in life," was the prompt reply. "I won't say a word against your going. I always think that when any person, man or woman, gets that raised look that I see in your face, slow coaches had better roll off the track. Come, now, and I'll write your letters."

"You are worth a million times your weight in gold!" Margaret exclaimed. "You are one of the few persons who don't carry a wet blanket about in readiness to extinguish people. I cannot tell how I thank you!"

The gentleman laughed.

"Rather an extravagant valuation, considering the present percentage, and my pounds avoirdupois. As for wet blankets, I never did much believe in 'em."

While the governor wrote, Margaret stood at his elbow and watched the extraordinary characters that grew to life beneath his pen.

"Are you sure they will understand what those mean?" she asked timidly.

"They will know the signature," he replied, making a dab over a letter, to indicate that an *i* was somewhere in the vicinity. "You can use them as *cartes*—well—*noires*, I suppose, on the strength of which you are to ask anything you please. Choate and I"—here a polysyllable was dashed across the whole sheet—"had a vocation for lettering tea-boxes, you know. There! now you had better use either of these first, if it is just as convenient, and keep Mr. Lincoln's till the last. But aren't you afraid of being stopped on the way? Everything is in a heap down there."

"So I hear; but I feel as if we shall get through."

"Don't mention to any one about my going, will you?" she whispered, as they went to the door.



He laughed. "To nobody but the council. Good-bye. Good luck to you!"

An hour later she saw the city slowly disappearing as the cars rolled out over the new lands.

Mr. Lewis settled himself comfortably in his seat. "And now for Maryland, my Maryland!"

"By George!" he exclaimed presently, putting his hand into his pocket, "here is a letter from Mr. Southard. It will serve to amuse us; but I am sorry that the others hadn't seen it."

He opened the letter, and they read it together. Mr. Southard had been ill, he wrote, and was yet only able to dawdle about the wards of the hospital and gossip with the patients. He had been offered private quarters, but had, on many accounts, preferred a hospital. It chanced that the Sisters of Charity had charge of the one to which he was sent, and they had given him the best of care.

That was the gist of the letter.

"How will that read to his congregation, I wonder?" Margaret said. "I fancy they won't half like it."

"Perhaps not. But I call that a good letter. It is the best we have had; not a word of religion, from first to last."

"But it breathes the very spirit of charity," was the quick reply. "How gently he mentions every one! Not a hard word even for the enemy!"

Mr. Lewis deliberately folded the letter.

"I dare say; and that is the kind of religion I like. When I hear a man continually calling on God to witness everything he says and does, I always think that he stands terribly in need of a backer."

They reached New York the next morning, and learned there that the panic was increasing rather than di-

minishing. The track was yet open, but no one went South who had not pressing business.

"What do you say, Maggie?" asked Mr. Lewis. "On to Richmond, eh?"

"Do let us go!" she begged, her impatience growing with every obstacle.

"On it is, then. I like your pluck."

"I should think that the lady would rather wait," the conductor suggested.

"Wait, sir?" said Mr. Lewis bluffly. "By no means! Don't trouble yourself. She isn't one of the squealing sort."

"Very well," the man replied doubtfully. "But we shall go pretty fast."

Margaret's heavy eyes brightened. "That is what I want. You cannot go too fast for me."

On they went again with steadily increasing speed, reaching Philadelphia ahead of time. There fresh news of disaster awaited them. On then to Baltimore, where they found the citizens arming, and every one full of excitement.

"I must and will go through!" Margaret said passionately, seeing Mr. Lewis about to expostulate.

He resumed his seat. "Then I shall go with you."

They stopped only long enough to be assured that communication with Washington was still open, then started on the last stage of their journey, keeping a sharp lookout, since it was not impossible that at almost any moment they might be saluted by a volley of musketry, or thrown headlong over an unseen hiatus in the rail.

"Seems to me we are getting over the ground at a tearing pace," remarked one of the passengers in a lazy drawl. "For my part, I don't

know but I'd as lief stand my chance of a minie-ball as run the risk of being knocked into railroad-pi. A slug is a neat thing; but these smash-ups are likely to injure a fellow's personal appearance."

"There they are!" exclaimed another, who had been watching through a glass ever since they left Baltimore. "I should guess that there's only a score of cavalry; but they may have more behind. Do you see? Just over the hill. It's a pretty even thing which of us reaches the crossing first. Not above a mile ahead, is it?"

He of the drawl, a cavalry captain, turned to Margaret. "Do you object to fire-arms, ma'am?" he asked, in much the same tone of voice he would have used in asking if she objected to cigar-smoke.

"Not when there is need of them," she replied.

He pulled a beautiful silver-mounted revolver out of his pocket, and carefully examined the barrels.

"This has been like a father to me," he said with great tenderness. "It's all the family I have. The barrels I call my six little sisters. Each one has a name. They've got pretty sharp tongues, but I like the sound of 'em; and they always speak to the point. Jennie is my favorite—see! her name is engraven, with the date—ever since she helped me out of a hobble at Ball's Bluff. I was playing cat and mouse with a fellow there, he with his rifle aimed, waiting to get a shot at something besides my boot or the end of my beard, and I hanging on the off-side of my horse, clinging to saddle and mane. I was brought up on horse-back, and have spent a good part of my time scouring over the Southwest, Missouri, Texas, and thereabouts; but of course I couldn't hang there for ever. Well, just as I was think-

ing that I should have to drop, or straighten up and take my slug like a man, I managed to spare a finger and thumb, and got Paterfamilias here out of my belt. Where can one better be than in the bosom of his family? says I. I didn't hurt the fellow much; I didn't mean to. When two men have been dodging and watching that way for some time, they get to have quite an affection for each other. I spoilt his aim, though; and I fancy that he will never be a very good writer any more."

"Aren't you sorry now that you came?" Mr. Lewis asked Margaret.

"No," she said brightly; "I feel as though we shall get through."

A new spirit was beginning to stir in her veins. The speed of the cars was of itself exciting—those long strides at the full stretch of the iron racer, when the wheels, instead of measuring the track with a steady roll, rise up and drop again with a sharp click, as regular as verse; not that cantering line of Virgil's, "Quadrupedante" and the rest, but a hard, iambic gallop. Besides this, the sense of danger and power combined was intoxicating. For, after all, danger is intolerable only when we have nothing to oppose to it.

There had been trees and rocks, but they were changed to a buzz, the road became a dizziness, and the whole landscape swam. There was something near the track that looked about as much like horsemen as the shadow of the same would look in broken, swift-running water; a few shots were heard, there was a little rattle of shivered glass; then all the men broke into a shout.

"Did you hear Jennie smile?" asked the captain, as he put Paterfamilias carefully into his belt again.

Margaret laughed with delight, and gave her handkerchief a little

flutter out the window. "I can guess how chain-lightning feels," she said; "only it can't go on minutes and minutes."

#### CHAPTER XIII.

##### THE COURT OF THE KING.

AFTER their little adventure, our travellers rode triumphantly into Washington, and Miss Hamilton found her friends glad to receive her the more so that she came as a boarder, and their house was nearly empty.

The Blacks had, in their younger days, been humble followers of Doctor Hamilton; and though their acquaintance with Margaret was slight, as they felt a kind of duty toward all the connection, they were proud to receive her.

"I am anxious about friends whom I have not heard from for some time," she explained; "and I have come here to look round a little."

"Who do you know in the army?" Mrs. Black inquired, not too delicately, considering the reserve with which her visitor had spoken.

Miss Hamilton was not learned in the slippery art of evasion. She simply ignored the question.

"I am exhausted," she said. "Of course I did not sleep any last night; and the ride has been fatiguing. I have but one desire, and that is to rest. Can you show me to my room at once? I feel as though I should drop asleep as soon as my head touches the pillow. When I do sleep, please don't wake me."

When she lay down to rest the afternoon sun was gilding the trees in the square opposite, flaring on the long white-washed walls of the hospital in their midst, and brightening momentarily the pale faces pressed

close to the window-bars of the jail beyond. When she woke from the deep and dreamless sleep that seemed to have almost drawn the breath from her lips, it was night. Some one had set a star of gas burning in her room, and left a plate of cake and a glass of wine on the stand at her bedside.

Margaret raised herself like one who has been nearly drowned and still catches for breath, gathered her benumbed faculties and recollected where she was. All was quiet within the house; and without there was stillness of another sort, a silence that was living and aware, a sense as of thousands waking and watching. Now and then there came from the hospital across the street some voice of a sleepless sufferer, the long, low moan of almost exhausted endurance, the broken cry of delirium, or the hoarse gasp of pneumonia.

After a while these sounds became deadened, and finally lost in another that rose gradually, deepening like the roll of the sea heard at night.

Margaret went to her window and leaned out. The sultry air was heavily-laden with fragrance from the flower-gardens around, and in the sky the large stars trembled like over-full drops of a golden shower descending through the ambient purple dusk.

That sea-roll grew nearer as she listened, and became the measured tramp of men. Soon they appeared out of the darkness at the left, marching steadily line after line, and company after company, to disappear into darkness at the right. They moved like shadows, save for that multitudinous muffled tread, and save that, at certain points, a street-light would flash along a line of rifle-barrels, or catch in a flitting sparkle on a spur or shoulder-strap. Then, like a dream, they were gone; darkness and distance had swallowed them up

from sight and hearing; and again there was that strange, live stillness, broken only by the complaining voices of the sick.

As Margaret looked, the dim light in one of the hospital-wards flared up suddenly and showed three men standing by a bed near one of the windows. They lifted the rigid form that lay there, and placed it on a stretcher; two of the men bore it out, and the light was lowered again. After a little while the men appeared outside bearing that white and silent length between them, through the dew and the starlight, and were lost from sight behind the trees. When they returned, they walked side by side; and what they had carried out they brought not back again.

The watcher's heart sent out a cry: "O Father in heaven! see how thy creatures suffer."

In the excitement of the last part of her journey, and the exhaustion following it, she had almost forgotten her object in coming; but this sight brought it all back. She remembered, too, that she had been dropping into the old way of taking all the burden on her own shoulders; and even in crying out for pain, she recollected the way of comfort. How sweet the restfulness of that recollection! As though a child, wandering from home, lost, weary, and terrified, should all at once see the hearth-light shining before him, and hear the dear familiar voices calling his name. She thought over the lessons learned during that blessed retreat, that Mecca toward which henceforth her thoughts would journey whenever her soul grew faint by the way. The half-forgotten trust came back. Who but He who had set the tangles of this great labyrinth could lead the way out of it? Who but He whose hand had strung the chords of every human heart could ease their strain-

ing, and bring back harmony to discord? Where but with Him, the centre of all being, could we look for those who are lost to us on earth?

When, long after sunrise, Mrs. Black entered her visitor's chamber, she found Margaret kneeling by the window, fast asleep, with her head resting on the sill.

There was plenty of news and excitement that morning. All communication with the North was cut off, the President and his family had come rushing in at midnight from their country-seat, and there was fighting going on only a few miles out of town. It was altogether probable that the Confederates would be in the city before night.

Mrs. Black told all this with such an air of satisfaction in the midst of her terror that Margaret made some allowance for embellishment in the story. Evidently the good woman enjoyed a panic, and was willing to be frightened to the very verge of endurance for the sake of having it to tell of afterward. She went about in a sort of delighted agony, gathering up her spoons and forks, and giving little shrieks at the least unusual sound.

"If they should bombard the city, my dear," she said, "we can go down cellar. I have an excellent cellar. It is almost certain that they will come. We must be in a strait when the treasury-clerks come out. And such a sight! They passed here just before I went up to call you, all in their shirt-sleeves, and looking no more like soldiers, dear, than I do this minute. Half of them carried their rifles over the wrong shoulder, and seemed scared to death lest they should go off. And no wonder; for the way the barrels slanted *was* enough to make you smile, even if there were a bomb-shell whizzing past your nose. The muzzles looked all

ways for Sunday, so to speak. There were little boys with them, too. I don't see where their pas and mas were, if they've got any. It's a sin and shame. Do eat some more breakfast, pray! You may as well have a full stomach; for if we should be obliged to hide in the cellar, we might not dare come up to get a mouthful for twenty-four hours. I do hope it won't be a long siege. If they've got to come in, let 'em come. I'm sure they would be too much of gentlemen to molest a houseful of defenceless females. As for poor Mr. Black, he doesn't count. Though he is my husband, I have seen braver men, not to speak of women. I had to threaten him, this morning, within an inch of his life, to prevent him from running a Confederate flag out of the window. He keeps one in his trunk, in case it should be needed. He declared he heard firing in the avenue. Bless me! What is that?"

"One of the servants has broken a dish."

"The destructive minxes! But where are you going, dear? Over to the hospital? Oh! they don't admit visitors on Sunday. Even on week-days you can't get in till after the surgeons have gone their rounds, and that is never before ten o'clock. It is military rule, you know; as regular as clock-work. It won't come ten till sixty minutes after nine o'clock, not if you perish. The first time I went in there, the soldier on guard came near running me through with his bayonet, just because I didn't walk in a certain particular road. I tried to reason with him; but you might as well reason with stocks and stones. There was the man in the middle of the road, and there was the point of his bayonet within an inch of my stomach; and the upshot of the matter was, that I had to turn about and

walk in a straight road instead of a curved one, for no earthly reason that I could see. You really cannot get in to-day. Wait till to-morrow, and I will go over with you."

Margaret smoothed on her gloves.

"Mrs. Black," she said, "did you ever hear of the man who said that whenever he saw 'Positively no admittance' posted up anywhere, he always went in there directly?"

"Well," the lady sighed, "I can't say but you may get in. You are your grandfather's granddaughter, and he never said fail. Only, be sure you look your best. You remember the song your mother used to sing about the chief who offered a boatman a silver pound to row him and his bride across the stormy ferry; and the Highland laddie said he would, not for the 'siller bright,' but for the 'winsome lady.' Many's the time I cried to hear your poor mother sing that, and how they all perished in the storm, and the father they were running away from stood on the shore lamenting. Your grandfather would wipe his eyes on the sly, and wait till she had finished every word of it; and then he would speak up and say that she had better be singing the praises of God. May be the officers over there will be like the Highland boatman, and do for you what they would n't do for an ugly old woman like me."

Margaret closed her ears to that piercing sentence, "the song your mother used to sing"—O silent lips!—and going out, crossed over to the hospital.

As she turned into a curved road that approached the door, a soldier pacing there presented his bayonet, probably the same one that had threatened Mrs. Black's plaited linen stomacher.

"You must go the other way," he said with military brevity.

The smaller the warrior, the greater the martinet. Doubtless this young man regarded his present adversary with far more fierceness than he would have shown toward a six-foot Texan grey coat, with a belt bristling with armor, and two eyes like two blades.

Margaret retreated with precipitance, hiding a smile, and took the other road.

"Your pass, ma'am," said a second soldier at the step.

"I haven't any," she said pitifully, and looked with appealing eyes at an officer just inside the door.

He came out immediately.

"What is your pleasure, madam?" he asked, touching his hat.

She told her errand briefly, and handed him the letters she had brought.

Mrs. Black had not overrated the power of the winsome lady. The surgeon in charge, for this was he, merely glanced over the letters to learn the bearer's name and State. He had already found her face, voice, and gloves such as should, in his opinion, be admitted anywhere and at all times.

"Please come in," he said courteously. "It is almost inspection time now, and I must be on duty. But if you will wait in my office a little while, I shall be happy to escort you through the wards."

"Thank you! But cannot I go now, by myself?" said Margaret.

He drew himself up stiffly, in high dudgeon at the little value she set on his escort. "Certainly! You can do just as you please."

She thanked him again, and went up the hall, utterly unconscious that she had been greatly honored.

The hall was very long, so long that the door at the furthest end looked as though only a child could go through without stooping, and the

wards were built out to right and left. She visited every one, walking up and down the rows of beds, her eager glance flashing from face to face. There was no face there that she had ever seen before. With a faint voice she asked for the names of those who had lately died. The names were as strange as the faces. Finally she sat down in one of the wards to rest.

The inside of the hospital was altogether less gloomy than the outside had appeared. They were in a bustle of preparation for inspection, putting clean white covers on the beds and the stands, regulating the medicine-table and the book-shelves, squaring everything, looking out that the convalescents were in trim, belt-buckles polished, shoes bright, hair smooth, jackets buttoned up to the chin.

The ward looked fresh and cheerful. The white walls were festooned with evergreen, green curtains shaded the windows, and the floor was as white as a daily scouring could make it. Nearly half of the patients were dressed, and eagerly talking over the news; and even the sickest there looked on with interest, and brightened occasionally.

"Fly round here!" cried the ward-master, a fair-faced, laughing young German. "They've gone into the next ward. Hustle those clothes out of sight somewhere. Tumble 'em out the window! Kohl, if you groan while the surgeons are here, I'll give you nothing but quinine for a week. Can't somebody see to that crazy fellow up there! He's pulling the wreath down off the wall. Pitch into him! Tell him that he shan't have a bit of ice to-day if he doesn't lie still. And there's that other light-head eating the pills all up. I'll be hanged if he hasn't swallowed twenty-five copper and opium pills! Well,

sir, you're dished. Long Tom, mind yourself, and keep your feet in bed."

"I can't!" whispered Tom, who seemed to be a mere boy, though his length was something preposterous. "The bed is too short."

"Well, crumple up some way," said the ward-master, laughing. "I'll have you up next week, fever or no fever. If you lie there much longer, you'll grow through the other side of the ward."

"It isn't my fault," Tom said pitifully to Miss Hamilton, who sat near him. "When I went to bed here, five weeks ago, I wasn't any taller than the ward-master; and now I believe I'm seven feet long. I believe it was that everlasting quinine!" And poor Tom burst into tears.

"Here they are!" said the ward-master. "Attention!"

Instantly all was silence. Each convalescent stood at the foot of his bed, and the nurses were drawn up inside the door. The little procession of surgeons appeared, marched up one side of the ward and down the other, and out the door; and the inspection was over.

As they passed by her, one of them, in drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, drew with it a card, which, unseen by him, dropped at Margaret's feet. She took it up, and saw the photograph of the gentleman who had dropped it, dressed in the uniform of a Confederate colonel.

"Who was that last surgeon in the line?" she asked of Tom.

"That's our surgeon, Doctor A——. He is a Virginian."

"Who is his guarantee here, do you know?" she inquired.

"He's a friend of Senator Wylly's," Tom said.

An orderly came to the door. "Every man who is able to carry a rifle get ready to go down to Camp

Distribution," he said. "Don't let any of 'em shirk, Linn. Send some of those fellows down to the office to be examined. Every man is wanted."

As Margaret went out, she saw Surgeon A—— hasten from one of the wards, and look along the floor of the hall, as if in search of something. His face was very pale, she saw, and he looked up sharply at her as she approached him.

"Perhaps you miss this photograph, Col. A——," she said, offering it to him.

His face reddened violently as he took it. "Has any one seen it besides you, madam?" he asked.

"No one."

"Will you give me an opportunity to explain?" he asked eagerly. "If you would permit me to call on you, or accompany you out now——"

"By no means," she replied coldly. "I do not wish to hear any explanation. I am here on business of my own, and shall not, probably, take any further notice of what I have seen. But if on second thought I should consider myself obliged to mention it, you can make your explanation to Mr. Lincoln."

She left him at that, and went home to hear Mrs. Black's compliments on her success.

There were no more visits that day; but the next morning a close carriage was sent to the door, and Margaret began her rounds.

In the afternoon she found herself going out Fourteenth street toward Columbia Hospital. There was a shower, and as the horses plodded along through the pouring floods of southern rain, she leaned her face upon her hand and wondered sadly what was to come of this search of hers, and if that strange, irresistible impulse on which she had been shot, like Camilla on her spear, over every

obstacle to her coming, had been, after all, but a vain whim.

Looking up presently, she found that they were in the midst of what seemed to her an army, soldiers crowding close to the carriage, and stretching forward and backward as far as she could see. It was the Sixth corps, one of them told her, going out to meet Early and Breckinridge.

They were marching in a mob, without order, plodding wearily through the rain that just served to wash from them the stains of their last battle. Their faces were browned and sober, their clothes faded and stained; many, foot-sore with long marches, carried their shoes in their hands. They were little enough like the gay troops she had seen march away from home.

When they came to the college hospital, it was found impossible to reach the side-walk through that crowd, and Margaret ordered the driver to wait till they should pass. As she leaned back in her carriage and watched the living stream flow slowly over the hill, a gentleman came out of the hospital, and, standing on the sidewalk opposite her, seemed to be looking for some one among them. Presently his face brightened with a recognizing smile, and he waved his handkerchief to one who was riding near. As the horseman drew up between her and the sidewalk, Margaret's heart seemed to leap into her mouth. He was wrapped in a cloak, and a wide-brimmed hat, still dripping from the spent shower, shaded his face; but she knew him at the first glance.

"O Mr. Granger!"

A shout from the convalescents collected outside the tent wards drowned her glad cry, and the next instant she would not for the world have repeated it. By a sudden re-

vulsion of feeling, the face that had flushed with delight now burned with unutterable shame and humiliation.

For the first time she looked on what she had done as the world might look upon it—as Mr. Granger himself might look upon it. Friends or foes, he was a gentleman, and she a lady, and not a baby. She, wandering from place to place, unbidden, in search of him, weeping, praying, making a fool of herself, she thought bitterly, and he sitting his horse there gallantly, safe and merry, within reach of her hand, showing his white teeth in a laugh, stroking down his beard with that gesture she knew so well, taking off his hat to shake the raindrops from it, and loop up the aigrette at the side!

She had time to remember with a pang of envy the quiet, guarded women who sit at home, and take no step without first thinking what the world will say of it.

"If he should think of me at all," she said to herself, "he would fancy me at home, trailing my dress over his carpets, making little strokes with a paint-brush, having a care lest I ink my fingers, or teaching Dora to spell propriety—as I ought to be! as I ought to be! I need a keeper!"

But still, with her veil drawn close, she looked at him steadily; for, after all, he was going into battle, and he was her friend.

As she looked, he glanced up at one of the hospital windows, and immediately his glance became an earnest gaze. He ceased speaking, and his face showed surprise and perplexity.

"What do you see?" his friend asked.

"Strange!" he muttered, half to himself. "It is only a resemblance, of course, but I fancied I saw there



a face I know, looking out at me. It is gone now."

Whatever it was, the sight appeared to sober as well as perplex him. He took leave of his friend, and, drawing back to join his regiment, brought his horse round rather roughly against Miss Hamilton's carriage.

"I beg your pardon, madam!" he said at once, taking off his hat to the veiled lady he saw there.

He must have thought her scarcely courteous; for she merely nodded, and immediately turned her face away.

He rode slowly on, looking back once more to the hospital window, and in a few minutes was out of sight.

"Will you get out now?" asked the driver.

Margaret started.

"Why, yes."

She went in and seated herself in the hall. "I want to rest," she said to a soldier who stood there. "I don't feel quite well."

A slight, elderly lady in a black dress, and with her bonnet a little awry, came down the stairs, and stood looking about as though she expected some one.

"Can you tell me where Miss Blank is to be found?" she asked of the soldier to whom Margaret had spoken.

"She has been out in the tent wards, and there she comes," he said, nodding toward a young woman who came in at the door furthest from them, and, with a face expressive of apprehension, approached the waiting lady.

"You wished to see me?" she asked tremulously.

"Yes," was the reply. "You will be ready to return home to-morrow, or as soon as communication is re-established. I will send your transportation papers to-night. You need not go into the wards again."

The young woman stared in speechless distress and astonishment, her eyes filling with tears.

"Is that Miss Dix?" Margaret asked of the soldier.

"Yes," he replied. "She makes short work of it. That is one of the best nurses, and the best dresser in the hospital."

"Why is she dismissed?"

"Miss Dix has probably heard something about her. She's a good young woman, but the old lady is mighty particular."

Margaret rose to meet Miss Dix as she came along the hall.

"I am going to stay in Washington a few days," she said, "and I would like to be useful while I am here. Can I do anything for you?"

"Who are you?" asked the lady.

Margaret presented her credentials, and Miss Dix glanced them over, then looked sharply at their owner.

"I am afraid you are too young," she said.

"I am twenty-eight, and I feel a hundred," said Margaret.

"Do you know anything about nursing?"

"As much as ladies usually know."

"Will you go to a disagreeable place?"

"Yes, if it is not out of the city."

"Come, then; my ambulance is at the door."

In two minutes the carriage was dismissed, and Margaret was seated in the ambulance, and on her way down to the city again.

"You will be very careful who you speak to," the lady began; "you will dress in the plainest possible manner, wear no ornaments, and, of course, high necks and long sleeves. Your hair—are those waves natural?"

"Yes'm!" said Margaret humbly, and was about to add that perhaps she could straighten them out, but checked herself.

"Well, dress your hair very snugly, wear clean collars, and don't let your clothes drag. It looks untidy. Is that dress quite plain?"

Margaret threw back the thin mantle she wore, and showed a gray dress of nunlike plainness.

"That will do," the lady said approvingly.

Here they turned into the square, and got out at the door of the hospital Margaret had visited the day before. She was introduced to the officer of the day, received an astonished bow from the surgeon-in-charge in passing, caught a glimpse of Doctor A——, and was escorted to her ward.

"Be you the new lady nurse?" asked Long Tom.

"So it seems; but I am not quite sure," she said.

"I'm proper glad," said Tom, with an ecstatic grin. "I liked the looks of you when I saw you yesterday."

"And so here I am 'at the court of the king,'" she thought.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### OUT OF HARM'S WAY.

Common sense goes a great way in nursing; and when there is added a sympathetic heart, steady nerves, a soft voice, and a gentle hand, your nurse is about perfect, though she may not have gone through a regular course of training.

Ward six considered itself highly favored in having Miss Hamilton's ministrations, even for a few days. The nauseous doses she offered were swallowed without a murmur, fevered eyes followed her light, swift step, and men took pride in showing how well they could bear pain when such appreciative eyes were looking on.

Mrs. Black, rushing over to expose and entreat, became a convert. It was certainly very romantic, she

said; and since her young friend was not treated like a common nurse, but had everything her own way, it was not so bad. And without, perhaps, having ever heard the name of Rochefoucauld, the good lady added, "Anything may happen in Washington now."

Moreover, Miss Hamilton would sleep and take her meals at Mrs. Black's, which was another palliating circumstance.

Mr. Lewis, with a fund of gibes ready, came also to see the new nurse. But the sight of her silenced him.

Bending over a dying man to catch the last whisper of a message to those he would never see again; speaking a word of encouragement to one who lay with his teeth clenched and with drops of agony standing on his forehead; mediating in the chronic quarrel between regulars and volunteers; hushing the ward, that the saving sleep of an almost exhausted patient might not be broken—in each of these she seemed in her true place. As he looked on, he began to realize how impertinent are conventionalities when life and death are in the balance.

"I don't blame you, Margaret," he said seriously, "though I am glad that you don't think of staying any longer than I do. I will give you till Friday afternoon. If we start then, we can reach home by Sunday morning. The track is open, and I am just off for Baltimore. Good-by."

She accompanied him to the door. "If you should see Mr. Granger, or write to him," she said, with some confusion, "don't mention why I came here. I am ashamed of it."

"Oh! you needn't feel so," he replied soothingly. "We have had a nice little adventure to pay us for the journey; and you were breaking

your heart with inaction and anxiety."

"Women should break their hearts at home!" she said proudly, her cheeks glowing scarlet.

That was Wednesday. Thursday morning, as she rose from a five o'clock breakfast to go over to the hospital, a carriage stopped at the door, and, looking out, she saw Mr. Lewis coming up the walk.

O God! The blow had fallen! No need even to look into his white and smileless face to know that.

He stopped, and spoke through the open window. "Come, Margaret!"

Morning, was it? Morning! She could hardly see to reach the carriage, and the earth seemed to be heaving under her feet.

As they drove through that strange, feverish world that the sunny summer day had all at once turned into, she heard a long, heavy breath that was almost a groan. "O dear!" said Mr. Lewis.

She reached out her hand to him, as one reaches out in the dark for support. "Tell me!"

"It is a wound in the head," he said; "and any wound there is bad. I got the dispatch at Baltimore last night, and came right back. They forwarded it from Boston. Why did not you tell me that you saw him Monday?"

"Saw him!"

"Then you didn't know him?" Mr. Lewis said. "I thought it strange you shouldn't mention it. Louis says that when they were going out past Columbia College, he glanced up at one of the windows, and saw you leaning out and looking at him. You were very sober, and made no motion to speak; and after a moment your face seemed to fade away. It made such an impression on him that he asked to be carried there and

to that room, though it isn't an officers' hospital. He was almost superstitious about it, till I told him that you were really here."

It was true then. The intensity of her gaze, and the concentration of her thoughts upon him at that moment had by some mystery of nature which we cannot explain, though guesses have been many, impressed her image on his mind, and thrown the reflection of it through his eyes, so that where his glance chanced to fall at that instant, there she had seemed to be.

"You must try to control yourself, Margie," Mr. Lewis went on, his own lip trembling. "There is danger of delirium. He is afraid of it, and watches every word he says. He can't talk much. I'll give you a chance to say all you want to; and whenever I'm needed, you can call me. I will wait just outside the door. Give your bonnet and shawl to the lady. There, this is his room, and that is yours, just across the entry."

Then they went in.

The pleasant chamber was clean, cool, and full of a soft flicker of light and shade from trees and vines outside. On a narrow, white bed opposite the windows lay Mr. Granger. Could it be that he was ill? His eyes were bright, and his face flushed as if with health. The only sign of hurt was a little square of wet cloth that lay on the top of his head. But in health, in anything short of deadly peril, he would have smiled on seeing her after so long a time, and when she stood in such need of reassuring. His only welcome was an outstretched hand, and a fixed, earnest gaze.

She seated herself by the bedside. "I have come to help take care of you, Mr. Granger." Then smiling, faintly, "You don't look very sick."

"I was in high health before I got this," he said, motioning toward his head.

Perhaps he saw in her face some sharp springing of hope; for he closed his eyes, and added almost in a whisper, "It isn't as wide as a barn-door, nor as deep as a well; but it will do."

The room swam round before her eyes a moment, but she kept her seat.

Presently the surgeon came in, and she gave place to him. But as he removed the cloth from his patient's head, she bent involuntarily, with the fascination of terror, and looked, and at the sight, dropped back into her chair again. She had looked upon nature in her inmost mysterious workshop, to which only death can open the door. It was almost like having committed a sacrilege.

Mr. Lewis wet a handkerchief with cologne, and put it into her hand. The others had not noticed her agitation.

When the surgeon left the room, he beckoned Margaret out with him. "All that you can do is, to keep his head cool," he said. "Don't let him get excited, or talk much without resting. He has kept wonderfully calm so far; but it is by pure force of will. I never saw more resolution."

There was nothing to do, then, but to sit and wait; to make him feel that he was surrounded by loving care, and to let no sign of grief disturb his quiet.

She returned to the room, and Mr. Lewis, after bending to hold the sick man's hand one moment in a silent clasp, went out and left them together.

After a little while, when she had resumed her seat by him, Mr. Granger spoke, always in that suppressed voice that told what a strain there was on every nerve. "I should

have asked you to marry me, Margaret, if I had gone back safe," he said, looking at her with a wistful, troubled gaze, as if he wished to say more, but could not trust himself.

"No matter about that now," she replied gently. "You have been a good friend to me, and that is all I ever wanted."

"We could be married here, if you are willing," he went on. "Mr. Lewis will see to everything."

Margaret lightly smoothed his feverish hands. "No," she said, "I do not wish it. I didn't come for that. We are friends; no more. Let me wet the cloth on your head now. It is nearly dry."

He closed his eyes, and made no answer. If he guessed confusedly that his proposal, and what it implied, so made, was little less than an insult, it was out of his power to help it then. And if for a breath Margaret felt that all her obligations to him were cancelled, and that she could not even call him friend again, it was but for a breath. His case was too pitiful for anger. She could forgive him anything now.

"I shall always stay with Dora, if you wish it," she said softly. "Do not have any fears for her. I will be faithful. Trust me. I could gladly do it for her sake, for I never loved any other child so much. But still more, I will take care of her for yours."

"I arranged everything before I came away," he said, looking up again. And his eyes, she saw, were swimming in tears. "I looked out for both of you. Your home was to be always with her, and Mr. Lewis to be guardian for both."

Margaret could not trust herself to thank him for this proof of his care for her.

"Have you seen the chaplain?" she asked, to turn the subject.

"Yes; but I don't feel like seeing him again. He does me no good, and his voice confuses me. You are all the minister I need"—smiling faintly—"and yours is the only voice I can bear."

While he rested, she sat and studied how indeed she should minister to him.

Mr. Granger had never been baptized; and, though nominally what is called an orthodox Congregationalist, he held their doctrines but loosely. He had that abstract religious feeling which is the heritage of all noble natures, the outlines of Christianity even before Christianity is adopted, as Madame Swetchine says; but his experience of pietists had not been such as to tempt him to join their number. If a man lived a moral life, were kind, just, and pure, it was about all that could be required of him, he thought. Such a life he had lived; and now, though he approached death solemnly, it was with no perceptible tremor, and no painful sense of contrition.

She watched him as he lay there, smitten down in the midst of his life and of health. He was quiet, now, except that his hands never ceased moving, tearing slowly in strips the delicate handkerchief he found within his reach, pulling shreds, from the palm-leaf fan that lay on the bed, or picking at the blanket. It was the only sign of agitation he showed. His face was deeply flushed, his breathing heavy, and his teeth seemed to be set.

Once he raised himself, and looked through the open window at the tree-tops, and the city spires and domes. Margaret wondered if they looked *strange* to him, and what thoughts he had; but she never knew.

After waiting as long as she dared, she spoke to him. "Can I talk to you a little, Mr. Granger, without disturbing you?" she asked.

"Speak," he said; "you never disturb me."

She began, and without any useless words, explained to him the fundamental doctrines of the church, original sin, the redemption, the necessity and effects of baptism. What she said was clear, simple, and condensed. A hundred times during the last two years she had studied it over for just such need as this.

"You know of course," she concluded, "that I say this because I want you to be baptized. Are you willing?"

"I would like to do anything that would satisfy you," he said presently. "But you would not wish me to be a hypocrite? You cannot think that baptism would benefit me, if I received it only because you wanted me to. I don't think that I have led a bad life. I have not knowingly wronged any one. I am sorry for those sins which, through human frailty, I have committed. But if I were to live my life over again, I doubt if I should do any better. No, child, I think it would be a mockery for me to be baptized now."

She changed the cloth on his head, laid the ice close to his burning temples, and fanned him in silence a few minutes.

Then she began again, repeating gently the command of our Saviour regarding baptism, and his charge to the church to baptize and teach.

"It is impossible to force conviction," he said. "I cannot profess to believe what I do not."

The words came with difficulty, and his brows contracted as if some sudden pain shot through them.

"I am not careless of the future dear," he said after a while. "I know that it is awful, and uncertain; but it is also inevitable! It is too late now for me to change. But I

wish that you would pray for me. Let me hear you. Pray your own way. I am not afraid of your saints."

Margaret knelt beside the bed, and repeated the Our Father. He listened reverently, and echoed the Amen. She repeated the Acts, and there was no response this time; the Creed, and still there was no answer. She could not rise. In faltering tones she said the Memorare, with the request, "Obtain for this friend of mine the gift of faith, that though lost to me he may not be lost to himself."

Still he was silent.

All the pent emotion of her soul was surging up, and showing the joints in her mail of calmness. He was going out into what was to him the great unknown, and she, with full knowledge of the way, could not make him see it. One last, vain effort of self-control, then she burst forth with a prayer half drowned in tears.

"O merciful Christ! I cannot live upon the earth unless I know that he is in heaven. Thou hast said, Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. With my heart and my voice I knock at the door. Open to me for thy word's sake! Thou hast said that whatever we ask in thy name, we shall receive. I ask for faith, for heaven, for my friend who is dying. Give them for thy word's sake! Thou hast said that whoever does good to the least of thy children has done it unto thee. Remember what this man has done for me. I was miserable, and he comforted me. I was at the point of death, and he saved me. I was hungry, and he fed me. I was a stranger, and he took me in. Oh! look with pity on me, who in all my life have had only one year of happiness, but many full of sorrow; see how my heart is breaking, and hear me for

thy word's sake! for thy word's sake!"

As her voice failed, a hand touched her head, and she heard Mr. Granger's voice.

"I cannot make you distrust the truth of God," he said. "I do not believe; but also, I do not know. I am willing to do all that he requires. Perhaps he does require this. Such faith as yours must mean something. Do as you will."

"May I send for a priest right away? And will you be baptized?"

"Dear little friend, yes!" he said.

"O Mr. Granger! God bless you! I am happy. Doesn't he keep his promises? I will never distrust him again."

His grave looks did not dampen her joy. Of course it was not necessary that he should have much feeling. The good intention was enough. She wet his face with ice-water, laid ice to his head, put the fan in his hand, in her childish, joyful way, shutting his fingers about it one by one, then went out to send Mr. Lewis for a priest.

He stared at her. "Why, you look as if he were going to get well," he said almost indignantly.

"So he is, Mr. Lewis," she answered. "He is going to have the only real getting well. I shall never have to be anxious about him any more. He will be out of harm's way."

She went back to the sick-room then, quiet again. "Forgive me if my gladness jarred on you," she said. "I forgot everything but that you were now all safe. You will go straight to heaven, you know. And of course, since it is to be now, then now is the best time."

He said nothing, but watched her with steady eyes, wherever she moved. What thoughts were thronging

behind those eyes, she could never know. Nothing was said till Mr. Lewis came back with the priest.

It was sunset when he came, and the father staid till late in the evening. Then he went, promising to say mass the next morning for his new penitent, and to come early to see him.

Mr. Granger was evidently suffering very much, and Margaret would not talk to him. Only once, when he opened his eyes, she said,

"You wish Dora to be a Catholic?"

"Yes, surely! O my child!" with a little moan of pain.

When the priest came up in the morning, they had some difficulty in rousing Mr. Granger; and when at length he comprehended their wishes, he looked from one to the other with an expression of incredulity.

"Communion for me!" he repeated.

The priest sat beside him, and as gently as possible prepared him for the sacrament.

"What! it is really and indeed the body and blood of Jesus Christ that is offered me as a viaticum?" he asked, now thoroughly roused.

"God himself has said so; and who shall dispute his word?"

The patient raised himself upright. "After I have spent all my life in forgetfulness of him, when I turn to him only on my death-bed, will he come to me now, and give me all himself?"

"Yes," the priest answered. "He

forgives generously, as only God can. He does not wait, he comes to you. 'Behold! I stand at the door, and knock.'"

The sick man lifted his face; "O wonderful love!" he exclaimed.

The priest smiled, and put on his stole.

"The angels wonder no less than you," he said.

Left alone with him once more, Margaret knelt, praying continually, but softly too, so as not to disturb one sacred thought in that soul for the first time united to its Saviour. When a half-hour had passed, she touched his folded hands. He had always before opened his eyes at her faintest touch; but now he did not.

"He has lost consciousness," the surgeon said, when she called him. "He will never speak again."

"Oh! never again? What? never again?"

Mr. Lewis took her by the hand. "Try to bear it, Maggie," he said. "Think what comfort you have."

"But he never said good-by to me! I wanted to say something to him. I had so much to tell him; but I thought of him first!"

Ah! well. When we go down to the valley of the shadow of death with our loved ones, and find the iron door that admits them shut in our faces, then indeed we know, if never before, how precious is faith. And those who can see the pearly gates beyond the iron one should take shame to themselves if they refuse to be comforted.

## CHAPTER XV

## "THE COMING OF THE MESSENGER."

ALL through that terrible day, the two staid by Mr. Granger's bedside, holding his hands, cooling his fevered face, and watching for a sign of consciousness that came not. At evening there was a struggle, short but sharp, and before they had breathed forth the breath they caught as he started up, the soul had broken loose, and a lifeless form sank back upon the pillow.

Do they listen to us when they are gone? Could he, in the first surprise of sudden freedom, hear the cry, like that of a bereaved Lear, that sought to follow him, "Oh! stay a little!" or the weeping testimony of the other, "There stopped the noblest, kindest heart that ever beat"?

But listen though he might, from one he heard no word of mourning or appeal after that. Since he was happy, and had no longer any need of her, and since she had done all in her power to do for him, she could now remember herself. That his humiliating offer of an empty hand had been kindly meant, did not lessen her resentment, but rather increased it. However confident he had been that his interpretation of her perfect-

ly frank conduct was the true one, he should never have allowed her to know it, she said. Her heart seemed hardened toward him, and all her friendship dead. "How I have wasted myself!" was the bitter comment with which she turned away from taking her last look at him.

More than once, in the first days of their loss, that fiery anger of an insulted heart broke forth. On their way home, as she sat on the steamer-deck at night, slowly touching bead after bead of her rosary, not praying, but waiting for a prayerful feeling that might come, there came instead a recollection of the year before. It rose and painted itself, like a picture, between her and the wide cool shade and sparkle of midnight sea and sky. There was the home parlor, the window where she sat that day after her retreat was over, so happy, half with heaven and half with earth, the curtain fanning her, the vines swinging in and out in the light breeze. She saw Mr. Granger come to her side, and drop a rosary into her hands, saw the silver glitter of his pretty gift, and heard the words that



accompanied it, "And indeed, it should have been of gold, had not Jupiter been so poor."

The words caught a new meaning as she recollected them.

"If not gold, then nothing!" she exclaimed; and, leaning over the rail, flung his gift as far as she could fling it out over the water.

The waning moonlight ran around the frosted chain and pearl beads, as if some spirit hand had swiftly told every Pater and Ave of them in expiation of that rash act. Then the waters caught them, and they slipped twinkling down through the green deeps.

Margaret left the deck, and went down to where Mr. Lewis walked to and fro, keeping his mournful watch. His face was pale, and his eyes heavy. He looked perfectly grief-stricken.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Has any one spoken to you?"

"No; but I have been thinking." She leaned on his arm, and looked down upon the casket at their feet. "That man thought that I wanted him to marry me. Is it only a wicked pride, I wonder, that rises up in revolt when I remember it? Should not there be a better name? I could not be angry then, because he was dying; and I forgot it till the next night, after all was over, when I went in to see him. I was full of grief then, and had some silly notion, just like me! of telling him, and that he would hear. The wind had blown the hair over his forehead, and just as I started to put it back, I recollected, and caught my hand away and left him. I had nothing to say to him then, nor since. What did he want to kill my friendship so for? His memory would have been sweet to me. It is poisoned."

"Well," Mr. Lewis said, with a sort of despair, "women are queer

beings, and you are ultra womanish. One day you will risk your life for a man, and the next you will look with scorn upon him in his coffin. A better name than pride, do you say? I call it the most infernal kind of pride. Where is your gratitude, girl, toward the man who never had any but a kind word and thought for you? He arranged everything for you, that first night, just as much as he did for Dora; and made me promise that you should never want for a friend while I live. You ought to humble yourself, Margaret, and beg his pardon."

"Do you think so?" she asked faintly. "I hope that you are right. I would rather blame myself than him."

"Of course I think so!" he answered indignantly. "Did he ever give you one unkind look, even? Did he ever prefer any one else before you? Did he ever allow any one to speak against you in his presence? I never, before nor since, saw him take fire as he did once when some one criticised you to him."

"Did he? Did he?" exclaimed Margaret, kneeling by the casket, and laying her cheek to the cold wood. "Ah! that was indeed friendship!"

In that softened mood she reached home.

When death, in visiting a household, is unaccompanied by sordid cares, the lost one being necessary to our hearts alone; when the living have no remorse for the past and no terror for the future of their friend; when the silent face is peaceful; and when the earth that opens to receive it is warm and full of life, like the bosom of a mother where a sleeping child hides its face—then death is more beautiful than life.

Thus this celestial visitant came to

the Granger household; and if an angel had alighted visibly in their midst, and folded his white wings to tarry there a day, the presence could not have been more sacred or more sweet. Every sign of gloom was banished. The light was no more shut out than it always was in summer; all the rooms were perfumed with flowers; and the master of the house was not left alone, but lay at the front end of the long parlor suite, in full sight of the family as they came and went.

Among the many callers who came that day was the Rev. Dr. Kenneth, the old minister with whom we have seen Mr. Southard taking theological counsel. This gentleman listened with astonishment and indignation while Mrs. Lewis told him that Mr. Granger had died a Catholic, and would have a requiem mass the next morning.

"He must have been unduly influenced, madam!" said the minister excitedly. "Mr. Granger would never have taken such a step of himself. It is impossible!"

Somewhat embarrassed, Mrs. Lewis drew back, and disclosed Miss Hamilton sitting in the shadow behind her, and, at the first word of reply, gladly left the room, having no mind to stand between two such fires, though the doctor's opponent looked too pale and quiet to be very dangerous.

"With God all things are possible, Dr. Kenneth," was what Margaret said.

He regarded her sternly; yet after a moment softened at sight of the utter mournfulness of her face.

"O child of many prayers!" he exclaimed, "whither have you wandered?"

"Please don't!" she said. "I cannot bear anything; and we don't want any harsh words while he is here."

The doctor hesitated, and turned to go; but she stopped him.

"While I saw you standing out there and looking at him, I remembered how often you used to come to my grandfather's, and how you petted me when I was a little girl. One day I was trying to carry you the large Bible, and I fell with it. Grandfather scolded me; but you patted my head when you saw that I was on the point of crying, and said that the Highest and the Holiest fell, not once only, but thrice, under his burden. And you pulled my curls, and said, laughing, that if strength dwelt in length of locks, then I ought to be able to carry not only the Bible, but the house. What makes the difference now? Are you harder? or am I in less need of charity?"

"You have your friends," he said coldly, "those for whom you left us."

"Not so," she replied. "I have those in this house; but in the church I had only him out there. My church, here, at least, does not receive converts as yours does. I suppose it must be because they know that we are only coming home to our own Father's house, and they think it would be presumptuous in them to come to meet us, as if we needed to be welcomed."

"What! was no courtesy, no kindness shown you?" he asked incredulously.

"Scarcely a decent civility," she replied. "But no matter about that. Only, I want you to remember it, and to send my old friends back to me. If they will not come, then their talk of religious freedom is hardly sincere; and if you do not tell them, then I shall think you unchristian. Indeed, doctor, when you have passed me in the street, without any notice, I haven't thought that you were very good just then."

The doctor looked at her keenly. "I will be friends with you on one condition," he said.

"And that?"

"Let Mr. Southard alone!" he said with emphasis.

Before she could utter a protestation, he had left the room.

The day crept past, and the night, and another day; and then there was nothing for them to do but take up their life, and try to make the best of it.

The first event to break the monotony came in September, when Dora was baptized. All the family attended the ceremony, for the time putting aside whatever prejudices they might feel. Then they began to look eagerly for Mr. Southard's return.

He might be expected on the first Sunday of October, he wrote most positively, but, for the rest, was very indefinite. He wrote so vaguely, indeed, that his congregation were rather displeased. His leave of absence had expired, yet he seemed to consider his coming home a furlough. Rather extraordinary, they thought it.

Mr. Southard was not one of those pastors who live in a chronic deluge of worsted-work from their lady friends. On his first coming to the pulpit, there had been symptoms of such an inundation; but he had checked them with characteristic promptness, representing to the fair devotees the small need he had of four-score pairs of pantoufles, even should his life be prolonged as many years, and suggesting that those who had so much leisure might profitably employ it in visiting and sewing for the poor. But the repulse was given with such simplicity and candor, and so utterly unconscious did he appear that any motive could have prompted their labors save a profound conviction that their pastor was shoeless, that even the most inveterate needle-work-

man forgave him. He was not in the least sentimental, he was indeed strict, and often cold, though never harsh.

Still, though he lacked many of the qualities of a modern popular minister, his people were much attached to him. They trusted him thoroughly, and they were proud of him. He had talent, culture, and a high character and reputation. He was not a sensational preacher; but his directness and earnestness were unique, and occasionally his hearers were electrified by some eloquent outburst, full of antique fire kindled at the shrines of the prophets. It also did not go against him that he was the handsomest man in the city, a bachelor, and rich enough in his own right to dispense with a salary.

Great, therefore, was their delight when his return was positively announced, and they set about preparing for it with a good will.

The church was renovated, a new Bible and a sofa were purchased, and a beautiful Catharine-wheel window, full of colored glass, was put in over the choir. Receptions were arranged, flowers bespoken, committees appointed, the barouche which was to take him home from the depot was chosen, and the two dignitaries who were to occupy it with him were, after due deliberation, selected. All this was done decently and in order. Mr. Southard's people were far from being of the vulgar, showy sort, and prided themselves on being able to accomplish a good deal without any fuss whatever. Even the newspaper chorus which proclaimed each progressive step of the minister's homeward journey, as Clytemnestra the coming of the sacred fire, sang in subdued language and unobtrusive type. At last, all that was wanting was the final announcement, in the Saturday evening papers, that the reve-

rend gentleman had arrived. Indeed, the notice had been written, with all particulars, the evening before, and had almost got into print, when it was discovered that Mr. Southard had not arrived. The barouche had returned from the depot without him, the two dignified personages who went as escort suffering a temporary diminution of dignity and an access of ill-temper. It is rather mortifying to see people look disappointed that it is only you who have come, and to know that not only have you lost the glory which was to have been reflected on you from the principal actor in the scene, but that your own proper lustre is for the time obscured.

It was found, however, that a letter had been written by Mr. Southard, not a pleasing one, by any means, to his disappointed masters of ceremonies. He would be in his pulpit on Sunday morning, he informed them; and after Sunday would be happy and grateful to see any of his dear and long-tried friends who would be so kind as to call on him. But till that time he did not feel equal to the excitement of any formal reception. He had scarcely recovered his strength after a long illness, he was fatigued with travel, and also, he was returning to a house made desolate by the death of one of his oldest and dearest friends.

"They are terribly wilted," Mr. Lewis said, as the family sat around the centre-table that evening. "You never saw anybody so grumpy as the deacons are. They are scandalized, moreover, in view of the only way in which he can come now. Of course, he will have to travel all night, and come into town Sunday morning. There's Sabbath-breaking for you."

"One good thing," Mrs. Lewis said; "they have stopped ringing the door-bell. I do believe there have been a hundred people here

to-day to ask if Mr. Southard had come."

"Auntie," said Aurelia, with a look of mild horror, "you don't know what uncle said to the last gentleman who came. He told him that when the minister made his appearance, he would hang out a flag over the portico, and fire rockets from the front windows."

The three ladies were sewing, and Dora sat beside Margaret with a catechism in her hand, learning the Acts.

"Aunt Margaret," whispered the child, "what do you think God told me when I said, 'O my God! I firmly believe'? Says he, 'Oh! what a lying little girl you are!'"

"Why should he say that?" was the grave inquiry.

"Because I told him that I believed all the sacred truths; and how can I believe when I don't know 'em? This is what I did; I said, 'Please don't listen to me now, O Lord! I'm not talking to you. I'm only learning my lesson.'"

"Come to bed now, my dear," said Margaret, "and we will talk about it."

"I did not expect Mr. Southard to show so much feeling," Mrs. Lewis said, when the two had gone out. "He received the news of Mr. Granger's change of religion with such silent displeasure that I supposed he would discard even his memory. He shows courage, too, in still speaking of him as a friend; for some of his people will be displeased."

"I'm sure, aunt," Aurelia replied rather hastily, "no one can say that Mr. Southard ever lacked the courage to utter his sentiments."

"No," Mrs. Lewis said in a very moderate tone, but looked sharply into her niece's drooping face.

Aurelia had not looked up in speaking, and seemed to be engross-

ed in her work; but there was a glistening of tears through the thick lashes, and the delicate rose in her cheeks had grown crimson-hearted. She seldom spoke with spirit; but when she did, it always woke that rich bloom.

The bell rang again, and in a few minutes the parlor-door opened, and the Rev. Doctor Kenneth came in.

"The servant told me that Mr. Southard has not arrived," he said; "but as she did not absolutely forbid me, I came in to see the rest of you."

They welcomed him cordially. The doctor had got in the way of dropping in occasionally, and they were always glad to see him. The venerable gentleman was something of a courtier, and knew how to make himself all things to all men.

"I have my colleague at last," he said, "and to-morrow I promise myself the pleasure of hearing Mr. Southard, if he comes."

Margaret returned to the parlor, and was pleasantly saluted by the doctor who made room for her to sit beside him. She took the place willingly, being especially pleased with him just then; for, by his influence, her old friends were beginning to gather about her, coldly at first, it is true, but that would mend in time.

They resumed the conversation which her coming had interrupted.

"I have never denied that Mr. Maurice Sinclair might possess some noble qualities," the doctor said, in his stateliest manner. "And I have never said nor thought that he could rightly be called a base man. But I have said, and I still think that he was a dangerous man; and moreover, that last letter of his, instead of softening my judgment, makes me condemn him all the more; for it shows unmistakably what light he sinned against."

"But, doctor," interposed Aureli-

soft voice, "he seemed to be a Christian at last."

"By no means, my dear," the doctor answered decidedly. "His unbelief was nobler, that is all. The Christian soul strains upward, and drops off the earthly; the pagan soul strains outward, and grasps what is greatest on earth. He was a pagan. I have always, during my whole ministry, had more fear of those who stand on the border-lands between good and evil, than of those who are clearly in the enemy's country. Do you want to take wine with a drunkard? Certainly not. The faithful can resist a glaring tempter; but let one of these gallant chieftains come up with his mouth full of fine sentiments, and presto,

'All the blue bonnets are over the border!'

But what can we preachers do when the ladies decide to canonize a man? I'm afraid they are disposed to believe that a fine head must deserve a fine crown."

"There's one exception, doctor," Mr. Lewis said, pointing to his wife.

The lady appeared not to notice the allusion to herself, but spoke in a musing, silvery voice, her eyes fixed dreamily on space.

"What a wise arrangement of Providence it is, that interesting masculine penitents should awaken the gushing philanthropy of ladies, gentlemen standing aloof; while interesting feminine penitents almost as invariably excite the pious charity of men, ladies, in their turn, holding off. In both cases, there are the feast and the skeleton quite correct. I recollect, doctor, hearing you preach, years ago, a sermon on the Magdalen. It was very edifying; but I was sorry that you found it necessary to mention her golden hair. Indeed, I have always thought that the old painters would have made a better point if

they had represented her as a plain, middle-aged woman, with great haggard eyes, like pits of darkness through which the soul was struggling, only a spark, but kindled to a conflagration which should consume with holy fire that poor, desecrated clay of hers. That is the true Magdalen; not your light Correggio, who might be a *danseuse* reading a French novel after the ballet."

The lady had dropped her careless air, and was speaking almost vehemently. It seemed, indeed, that some personal experience lent a poignancy to her convictions on the subject.

"I am glad of the chance to express my opinions," she said, "and glad that you have made me angry enough to have courage to speak. I protest against this pernicious indulgence which latter-day Christians show to vice, persuading themselves that they are charitable. 'Swear him, and let him go,' as the soldier said of the rattlesnake. When I see these sentimentalists seek out real penitence where it hides speechless and ashamed, then I will call them charitable, and not before. But no; real penitence is not interesting. It cannot attitudinize, it stammers, it has red and swollen eyes, it shrinks almost from being forgiven, it never holds its head up again."

"But, madam," said the doctor, somewhat disconcerted, "all are liable to mistakes; and in being too strict with doubtful penitents, we may discourage the true ones."

"They are easily distinguished," she said curtly. "Besides, you lose sight of another risk you run. You appear to take for granted that none are tempted save those who fall. How do you know how many may be holding on to their integrity by a mere thread, struggling desperately but silently, needing every help, in

so precarious a condition that a breath, a word, may destroy them? Such people do not speak; you hear nothing of them but the crash of their fall. Or, if they fall not, you never know. To me, that conflict is more pathetic, more tragical, than all the paraded sighs and tears of those who have found that dishonesty doesn't pay. Those who do right simply and purely for God's sake are few and far between. Most people need the support of public opinion and the approbation of those whom they look up to. Let it be seen that, do what they may, if only they can excuse themselves prettily and plausibly, they will be easily forgiven, and set still higher than before, and what will be the result? You can see it in society to-day. Charity, so-called, has increased; has virtue increased?"

"If good women would not make themselves so disagreeable, as they often do," Mr. Lewis said gruffly.

"Try to please them," his wife replied. "Praise them a little; be agreeable yourselves, and see if they don't improve in that respect. Meet a person with a glum face, and if that person is sincere and sensitive, you are not likely to get smiles in return."

Aurelia leaned toward her aunt, put an arm around her, and whispered, "Dear auntie, you're an angel; but please don't say any more."

"I do not like to hear men and women criticise each other," the doctor said calmly, introducing a switch into the track of the conversation. "They are neither of them fitted to think for and judge the other. They, in the moral universe, are like earth and sea in the physical. And as air is common to earth and sea, so spirit, and all higher influences, are common to man and woman alike."

"Yes," Miss Hamilton said, "and while the earth has gold, and silver,

and iron, and gems, the sea has only pearls, and they are tears, woman's proper *parure*. And while the earth maintains its place, and is not moved, the sea goes moaning about, breaking itself on rocks, and climbing even to heaven, only that it may fall again upon the land."

"Blessed showers!" said the doctor, who had watched her smilingly while she spoke. "Be sure, Margaret, sooner or later those for whose sakes you and your sisters have climbed to heaven with such toil and pain will see some heavenly likeness in you, and hail you as welcome messengers. Don't lose courage, dear. Don't join the bitter waves that break themselves against the rocks, or the sly, insidious waves that steal away the land and drag it down. But let your part be with those who visit us by the way of heaven. Wouldn't you rather we should look up when we want you, though it were seldom, than look down, though it were often?"

She looked up, bright and blushing for a moment, like her old self, trembling with gladness, she knew not why. It seemed to be a prophecy of good tidings.

Into the silence that followed a deep sigh broke. They all looked up, then rose, speechless, changed suddenly into a group of mourners. For Mr. Southard stood before them with that in his countenance which showed how much more plainly than even their living faces he saw the shadow of one who was gone for ever.

Pallid with sickness, fatigue, and trouble, he came forward to receive their almost voiceless welcomes.

"God knows," he said, "that if the choice had been with me, my place, rather than his, should have been made vacant."

## CHAPTER XVI.

## A DESERTED FLOCK.

Bostonians have been accused of putting too much Sabbath into their Sundays; but long may it be before the noisy waves of business or pleasure shall wash away that quiet island in the weary sea of days. There is a suggestion of peace, if not of sacredness, in the silence almost like that of the country, in the closed doors and empty streets; and when the bells

"Sprinkle with holy sounds the air, as the priest with the hyssop  
Sprinkles the congregation, and scatters blessings upon them,"

he must be insensible indeed who does not—at least, momentarily—remember that there is another world than this.

On the morning after his return, Mr. Southard resumed his old Sunday habit of breakfasting in his own room, and none of the family saw him before service. He always went to his church early, and alone, and never spoke to any one on the way.

"Margaret, you really ought to go with us this time," Mrs. Lewis said. "I think you might unbend for once."

"To stoop from the presence of God to the presence of a creature is bending too far," was the reply. "Such bending breaks. I and my pet are going to see the heavens open, and the Lord descend; are we not, Dorothea, gift of God?"

Mrs. Lewis turned herself about before the cheval-glass to see the effect of a superb toilet that she had made in honor of the occasion. "Ah! well," she said. "You may be right. I have indeed a faithful heart, but a woefully skeptical head; shall we go now?"

The night had been very sharp for the season; but when they all went out together, the sun was shining

warmly through the morning haze, the air was still, and the dripping, splendid branches of the October trees were hesitating between hoarfrost and dew, and glittering with both. People in holiday attire, and with holiday faces, went past, the bells clanged out, then paused, and left only a tremulous murmur in the air, the very spirit of sound. Far away, a chime rang an old-fashioned hymn, in that quaint, stiff way that chimes have.

At a street-corner the party separated, and went their several ways.

As the Lewises entered their own church, they involuntarily exchanged a smile. Nothing could be prettier than that interior. The side-lights were all shut out, and for the first time the new window was unveiled, and threw its rich light over the choir, and up the nave, kindling the flowers that profusely draped the pulpit and platform, and edging with crimson the garnet velvet cushions. The people in this church had usually easy elbow-room, but to-day they permitted themselves to be crowded a little by visitors. There were even chairs brought into the galleries; and when the hour for service arrived, there was a row of gentlemen standing behind the last pews. But there was no sound save the soft rustle of ladies' dresses, and now and then a hushed whisper. There was the most perfect decorum and composure, and a silence that was respectful if not reverential. No belligerent mutterings ever rose through the voice of prayer or praise within these walls; no belated worshipper ever went tramping up to the very front after service had begun; and moreover, neither in this, nor in any other Protestant church, did visitors come with opera-glasses and chattering tongues, to turn what was meant as a place of worship into a place of amusement.

Quite late, Dr. Kenneth came up the aisle, and seated himself in the Lewis pew; and while every one looked at him, the door leading back from the platform to the vestry was opened, and almost before they were aware, Mr. Southard had entered and taken his place.

There was a soft stir and rustle all through the church, and the choir sang an anthem—that beautiful one of Brasbury's:

"How beautiful is Zion  
Upon the mountain's brow,  
The coming of the messenger,  
To cheer the plains below."

Mr. Southard sat with his eyes fixed on the cornice-wreath, and let his congregation stare at him, and they did not scruple to take advantage of the opportunity. The impression was not the one they had expected to receive. He was too pale and spiritual, and his expression was too much that of some lofty martyr fronting death unmoved, a St. Sebastian, pierced with arrows, his soul just pluming itself for flight through those lifted eyes.

Moreover, not only were all their flowers invisible to him, but he never looked at their new window, though the light from one of its golden panes streamed full in his face as he sat.

Where was the smiling glance that might, surely, have made one swift scrutiny of their familiar faces, unseen so long? Where was the prayer of thanksgiving that he had been brought safely back to his people, after such an absence, and through so many dangers? Where was the joyful hymn of praise?

When Mr. Southard rose, he repeated only the Lord's prayer; and the first hymn he read was *anything* but joyful:

"Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee,  
E'en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me."



"Dear me! doctor," Mrs. Lewis could not help whispering, "I do wish that for to-day, at least, he could have hidden the cross under the crown."

The text was unexpected: "*Little children, love one another.*"

Not a single war-note, not a word of that Aceldama from which he had but just come, but an impassioned exhortation that, casting aside all differences, dissensions, and uncharitableness, they should love each other even as Christ had loved them.

Mr. Southard seldom displayed any strong feeling except indignation or a lofty fervor; but now he seemed deeply moved, and full of a yearning tenderness toward those whom he addressed. And they, after the first, forgot their disappointment, and were almost as much affected as he.

"Why do I choose for my text words which recall the sufferings of our divine Lord?" he asked. "And why do I select words of parting exhortation rather than words of greeting? Because the passion is not yet ended; because Christ is no more a king to-day than he was nineteen centuries ago; because even among those who call upon his name, his commands, his entreaties are disregarded. Still his sceptre is but a reed, his purple still covers the marks of the lash, his brow still bleeds under its crown. Lastly, because I am not a pastor returning joyfully to his flock, hoping for no more partings, but one who comes sorrowfully to say farewell, scarcely daring to hope for any other meeting with you.

"A pastor? And who is he that leadeth the flocks of the Lord? He to whom the divine Shepherd hath given the charge, bidding him go. Brethren, he has not spoken to me, save in rebuking. Instead of green pastures, I have led you in the desert. For still waters, I have brought you to the banks of Marah. Who is he

in whose hands the baptismal waters are cleansing, who can bind man and woman as husband and wife, who can consecrate the bread and wine, who can loosen its burden from the penitent soul? He who, looking up the line of his spiritual descent, sees the tongues of fire alighting upon his ancestors in the Lord. Bear with me, my friends! At the head of my line stands the traitor who sat at meat with Christ, and ate the bread he broke, and drank the wine he blessed, and then betrayed him."

The congregation were too much startled and puzzled by this sudden turn to notice that Doctor Kenneth's head was bowed forward on the front of the pew, and that Aurelia Lewis was leaning with her face hidden on her aunt's shoulder.

But Mr. Southard saw them, and grew yet paler. When he spoke again, it was with difficulty.

"This is no place for me to stand and advocate doctrines denied by you. Yet surely it is no treason to the trust you reposed in me when you invited me to become your pastor, if I ask, if I entreat that you will examine fairly and prayerfully before you condemn my course.

"I dare not trust myself to thank you for all your past friendship for me, to utter my wishes for your future good, or to tell you how my heart is torn by this parting. I have only strength to go.

"Do you ask whither I am going? After years of mental torment unsuspected by you, and when at last my strength was deserting me, and the waters were going over my soul, where did I find refuge and safety? In that glorious old ship whose sails are full of the breath of the Spirit, who has faith for an anchor, the cross as her ensign, and St. Peter at the helm. Brethren, I am a Roman Catholic, thank God!"

Immediately the congregation were in confusion, and one gentleman stood up and called, "Stop, sir!"

The light that had sprung to Mr. Southard's face at the last words dropped out again. He leaned over the pulpit, and commanded silence with a gesture at once imploring and imperative.

"One word more!" he said. "Believe in my unaltered affection for you; and believe also that though my hands are not anointed to give benediction, I fervently pray that God may bless you now and for ever. Farewell!"

He turned away from them, and walked slowly toward the vestry-door. Before he had closed it behind him, a silence fell, and he heard Doctor Kenneth's trembling voice exclaim, "Let us pray!" Glancing back, Mr. Southard saw the old minister standing with upraised hands in his deserted pulpit.

Where he passed the rest of that day, the family did not know. It was early twilight when they saw him coming up the street toward the house. By that time they had recovered from their first excitement, all but Aurelia. She still kept her room.

Mr. Southard walked with a firm and dignified step, and his face was perfectly serene. He even smiled when he saw Margaret standing in the parlor window, watching for him.

"No servant shall open the door for him this time, at least," she thought, and hastened to open it herself.

"Welcome home!" she said exultingly, holding out both hands to him. "You did that nobly! A thousand times, welcome!"

Mr. Southard closed the door, then looked at her boldly, putting her hands back. "Do not mock my empty life with so slight a gift as mere kindness," he said. "If you

give me your hand, give it to me to keep."

She stood one instant wavering then gave him her hand again. "Keep it," she said.

Lingering behind him as he went to meet Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, Margaret flung her pledged hand upward as if she flung a gauge. "Louis Granger, you shall not look down and think that I am breaking my heart for you!"

#### CHAPTER XVII.

#### IN EXITU ISRAEL.

Some one tells of a wind so strong that he could turn and lean his back against it, as against a post. Mr. Southard found some such effect as this in the excitement caused by his change of religion. For there are times when a strong opposition is wonderfully sustaining. It fans the flame, and keeps the soul in a lively glow, without any expenditure of our own breath.

Being thus saved the pains of maintaining his fervor, the new convert took up tranquilly his religious studies, viewing from the inside that church which heretofore he had seen only from the outside. The study was an ever fresh delight; and as, one after another, new beauties were revealed, and new harmonies unfolded themselves, the miracle seemed to be, not that he should see now, but that he should have been blind so long.

No one knows, save those who have been born away from this home of the soul, the full delight of that succession of surprises and discoveries in the search made by him who comes late to his father's house. The first dawn or flash of faith, come as faith may, shows only the floor, and a dim and long-stretching perspective. But once inside, with what wonder, what curiosity, what incredulity, even,

we wander about examining the treasures of this new-found inheritance of ours. Surely, we say, here we shall be disappointed. Here there will be a shade on the picture. But, looking closely, we find instead a still more eminent beauty. Nor are these varied discoveries exhausted in a few months, nor in a few years, nor in many years. Even when the noon of life has been spent in the quest, and twilight comes, still there are

"such suites to explore,  
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune."

But the most spiritual of us are not all spirit; and when, after a few weeks, the storm of denunciation against him subsided a little, weary of its own violence, Mr. Southard began to feel the vacuum left by his loss of occupation, and to depend more on the home life.

Here the prospect was not without shadows. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis had behaved nobly, and, after the first shock, had stood by him through every trial. "Not that I am so fond of Catholicism," Mr. Lewis said. "But I like to see a man who has a mind of his own, and isn't afraid to speak it."

The shadow in this case was Mr. Lewis's niece, who showed an unconquerable coldness toward her former minister. This was not to him a matter of vital consequence, certainly, though it troubled him more than he would have expected. She had always looked up to him with undoubting faith as her religious guide. Now he perceived with pain and mortification that he had not only destroyed her respect for his own authority, but had made her distrustful of all authority.

He attempted to justify himself to her; but she stopped him.

"I do not occupy myself in criticising your conduct and opinions, Mr. Southard," she said; "and I would rather say nothing about it."

For the first time, it struck him that Miss Lewis had a very stately manner.

Neither was Miss Hamilton just what Mr. Southard wished his promised wife to be to him, though he could scarcely have told in what she was lacking. Her evident desire that for the present the engagement should be unsuspected, even by their own family, he did not find fault with, though it prevented all confidential intercourse between them; but he would have preferred that she had not been quite so positively friendly, and no more. It seemed a little odd, too, that he should never, even by accident, find her alone, though they had frequently met so in the old times.

Weary, at length, of waiting on chance, he requested an interview, and stated his wishes. He would like to go to Europe as soon as possible, and stay there a year. He could not feel himself settled in the church, till he had been in Rome a Catholic, having once been there an unbeliever. Of course he would expect to take his wife with him. Why should they delay. Why not be married at Christmas, and start so as to reach Rome before Easter?

Margaret grew pale. "It is so soon," she said in a frightened way. "And you know I cannot leave Dora. You might go without me." Then, as his countenance fell, she added, trying to smile, "I love my freedom, and want to keep it as long as I can. But when I do take bonds on myself, I shall be very dutiful."

"I do not think that you will lose any freedom which you need greatly desire to keep," he said gently, but with a shade of disapproval. "And as to Dora, Mrs. Lewis would take good care of her."

"Dora is a sacred charge to me, Mr. Southard," Margaret said hasty-

ly; "not only her person, but her faith. I cannot intrust her to any one else. Besides, she would break her heart if parted from me. No one else can comfort her when—when she needs comfort."

Mr. Southard considered awhile.

"I approve of your being careful to do your duty by the child," he said presently. "But, you know, some priest could have her religious education under his supervision while we are gone. I would not, on any account, urge you to violate a scruple of conscience. Possibly, however, if you should consult your confessor, he might decide that your duty to the child should bend to your duty to me."

Margaret's face blushed up crimson, and her eyes emitted a spark. "The confessor whom I shall consult when I name my wedding-day, will be my own heart," she said, in anything but a humble tone of voice.

Mr. Southard looked at her searchingly. "Can it be," he asked, "that a lack of affection on your part is the cause of this reluctance?"

"I esteem you highly, Mr. Southard," she replied faintly, shrinking a little. "But I am not very reasonable, and you must have patience with me. Please don't say any more now. This is very sudden. I will think of it."

"Very well," he replied. "Perhaps when you have thought, you may accede to my first proposal. It is not worth while to delay, you know, when one's mind is made up."

"I must go now with Dora to make her first confession," Margaret said, anxious to change the subject. "Will you excuse me? I am afraid the storm may grow worse. The rain is falling gently now; but you know the old proverb:

'When the wind comes before the rain,  
You may hoist your topsails up again;  
But when the rain comes before the winds,  
You may reef when it begins.'"

"And a true proverb it is in more ways than one," Mr. Lewis said, appearing at that moment. "When my wife begins by flying at me and tearing my hair out, and then goes to crying afterward, I hope for fair weather soon. But when she starts with a gentle drip of tears, I always look out for squalls before it is over. Remember that for your future guidance, Mr. Southard."

Margaret escaped from the room, and in a few minutes was on her way to the church, with Dora half hidden under her cloak, and nestled close to her side. As she rode along, feeling, some way, as if they were flying from pursuit or from a prison, she experienced one of those tender touches of recollection with which the Spirit, ever following us, seeks to recall our wayward hearts. "What should I do if I had no church to go to?" was the thought that came; and as it came, the altar toward which she was approaching, glowed through the chill November rain like the fire in happy homes.

Outside, in the corridor leading to that familiar chapel of St. Valentine, endeared by so many sacred and tender memories, they paused a moment and recollected themselves.

"My dear little one, Christ Jesus the Lord is in there!"

"Do you truly think that he likes me?" whispered Dora apprehensively, glancing askance at the lambent little flame that burned inside.

"Oh! yes," was the confident answer. "He is very fond of you when you are good."

The sweet face smiled again.

"Then I an't afraid of him, auntie. Come."

After an act of contrition on her own account, and a prayer for the

child, Margaret led Dora to the confessional, placed her on her knees there, and, dropping the curtain behind her, retired to wait at a distance.

Verifying the proverb, it was blowing quite violently when the two started for home again. Margaret went directly up to her chamber, having need to be alone. What was it striving within her, what memory, almost at the surface of her mind, yet unseen, like a flower in spring just ready to burst through the mould that feels but knows it not? On her table was a bunch of English violets that some one had left there for her. At the sight of them, her trouble sharpened to pain that had yet some touch of delight in it. The wind was full of voices, it caught the rain, and lashed the windows, it shook the doors, and called sighingly about the chimneys, and swung the vines against the panes. As she leaned there wondering and troubled, a faint, sweet perfume from the violets stole into her face. It was magical. She sank on her knees and drew the flowers to her bosom.

"O my friend! how could I ever dream of forgetting you?"

How it came back, that rainy day at the seaside, the terror of the tempest, the fire she had kindled, the watch she had kept, the presentiment of sorrow, then the muffled figure coming down the road, the rain, the wind, and his smile, all meeting her at the door, and the perfume of the violets he had brought her!

Who knows not the power that perfumes have over the memory? The influence of sound is evanescent, that which the eyes have seen the imagination changes in time; but a perfume is the most subtle and indestructible of reminders. You have walked in the world's beaten ways many a year, till the country home of your childhood is a picture almost

effaced from your mind. Its tones echo no more, its faces are faded, its scenes forgotten.

Some sultry summer day, wandering from the city, but only half weaned from the thoughts of it, your listlessly straying feet crush the warm, wild herbage, and a thick perfume of sweet-fern rises about you. What does it mean? Thrilling to your finger-tips, you bend and inhale that strange yet familiar scent. Its touch is as potent as the touch of the rod of Moses.

"A score of years roll back their tide  
Of mingled joy and pain;  
Dry-shod I cross the torrent's bed,  
And am a child again."

Old scenes come up: gray rocks start out, lichen-jewelled; there are billows of butter-cups, mayweed, and clover, over which your young fancies sailed moth-winged, and brought rich freights from every port; the long lines of pole and stone fences are built up again in a twinkling; the bounding spring leaps bubbling into the heart of the sunshine; in the woods the cold, bright waters run hurrying over the pebbles; there is the homestead, the smoke from the chimney, the open windows, some one standing in the door, some one calling you with a voice as real as your breath; there are faces with eyes that see you, every feature plain, there are hands stretched out.

How it rises and tramples on your present, that past that hides but never dies! How your heart-strings strain with the vain longing to stay for ever in this bright, recovered country, and look no more on the desert and the land of bondage!

"Flow back, O years! into your channel,  
Flow, and stop the way!  
Let me forget how vain the fancies  
Of that childish day."

If we did not know that every hope and sweetness in the past were but seeds for future blos-

som and fruit; if we did not know that childhood is but a bee's load of honey, but a babe's sip of milk, to those flowing streams in the promised land; if we did not believe that God's denial is brief, his bounty endless; that surely he sees and marks every pain; and that he holds the fulfilment of our utmost wish just at the verge of our utmost endurance—if we were not sure of this, could human nature bear the cross that sometimes is laid upon it? It could not!

Miss Hamilton did not appear at the dinner-table that day; but in the evening Mr. Southard was summoned to her in the library. She met him with an April face full of a grieved kind of joy, or a joyful grief, crossed the room toward him when he came in, and held out her hands to him.

"Forgive me!" she said hurriedly. "But, Mr. Southard, I cannot marry you. I made a mistake. Don't be angry with me. I cannot help it. And I think, too, that you mistook also."

"I do not understand this," he said, dropping her hand.

"I should never have thought of marrying, if I had not been angry with him," she said. "That was wicked and foolish, and I have got over it now. We are reconciled. I shall never forget him."

"Am I to understand that your remembrance of Mr. Granger is a bar to your union with me?" asked Mr. Southard, regaining his composure.

"An insurmountable bar!"

He bowed gravely. "Then there is no more to be said. I wish you good-evening."

She watched him go; and when the door had closed, broke into a soft laugh. "In exitu Israel," she said. "I am free!"

The door opened again, and Mr. Lewis came in. "You here?" he said. "I want to get the first volume of— But what's the matter with you? I just met Mr. Southard going into his room. Have you promised to marry him?"

"No, I have promised not to," Margaret said, smiling.

Mr. Lewis looked at her with a softening face, and eyes that grew dim.

"I'm glad of it, Maggie," he said. "My wife and Aurelia were sure that you and he would make a match; and I couldn't say anything against it. But I hated the thought of your forgetting him."

There was no danger, indeed, of her forgetting him. It was impossible for her. She had not one of those facile hearts that rest here and there, on whatever offers, growing worn and threadbare at last, till there is nothing left to give. Hers was an imperious constancy which, having once chosen, did not know how to change, and perpetually renewed itself, like a fountain, as fresh to-day as it was a century ago. Such affection does not absolutely need the happiness of earth; for its root is in the soul, not in the flesh, and the time of its perfecting is hereafter.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### DAYBREAK.

As there are plants that need crushing to bring out their perfume, so there are natures that become thoroughly amiable only through pain and humiliation. Mr. Southard's was one of these. Every blow that struck him made some breach in his puritanic severity, and revealed some hidden grace of mind or heart.

He had possessed an intellectual humility, and had submitted himself

with all the force of his reason. But such humility is like the weight of snow that in winter presses the head of the slender sapling to earth, whence it is ever ready to spring back again at the first fiery sun-touch. It savored too much of the arrogant self-accusation of those who, as Mr. Lewis said, think they are the sun because they have spots on them. Now, he seemed really humble, he distrusted himself, and he accepted kindness with a gratitude that touched the hearts of those who gave it.

To Mrs. Lewis's surprise, he made a confident of her, and spoke quite freely of his disappointment.

"I do not blame Margaret," he said. "It was ungenerous of me to take advantage of her first moment of enthusiastic sympathy for me to exact a promise from her. But the temptation was strong. Existence with her would never be mere vegetation. She always gets at the inside of life. However, since God has willed it otherwise for me, I shall try to act like a Christian and like a sensible man. All the difference it makes in my plans is that I shall go away a little sooner."

They were sorry to have him go; for their esteem for him had insensibly grown into affection, and their affection constantly increased.

"I declare, I had no idea that I should feel so bad about it," Mr. Lewis said when the time came for good-byes. "Give me your shawl to take out. I am going to the depot with you."

Margaret and Dora had taken leave of Mr. Southard, and were standing in one of the front windows, watching to see him off. Mrs. Lewis walked slowly out of the parlor with him.

"Where is Aurelia?" he asked, looking about. "I have not seen her."

"Oh! she told me to say good-by for her," answered Mrs. Lewis carelessly.

He hesitated, and looked hurt. "I suppose she doesn't care to take the trouble to see me," he said. "Tell her I said good-by, and God bless her."

"I will do nothing of the kind!" said the lady, with emphasis.

Mr. Southard stared at her in astonishment.

"Doesn't care to take the trouble!" she repeated indignantly. "It is rather you who haven't cared to treat her with common gratitude or civility. You have had eyes for only Miss Hamilton, who didn't care a fig for you; while Aurelia, the poor simpleton! who made a hero of you, and broke her heart because you were in disgrace with the world and disappointed in love—you hadn't a glance for. No; I won't say good-by to her. I will let her believe that you went without remembering her existence, as you came near doing. It will help her to forget you. There, take that with my blessing, and good-by. The carriage is waiting."

"Where is she?" he exclaimed, his whole face changed, and become alive all at once. "I shall not stir from the house till I have seen her, if I have to wait a year."

"What will Miss Hamilton think of your constancy?" asked Mrs. Lewis with a toss of the head.

"Madam," said Mr. Southard, "for me there is but one woman in the world, and that is she who loved me, without waiting to be asked. Will you be so good as to tell Aurelia that I wish to see her in the library?"

He went toward the library, and Mrs. Lewis leisurely returned to the parlor, a curious little smile on her lips.

Aurelia Lewis was seated before

the library fire, with her hands folded in her lap.

As Mr. Southard paused an instant at sight of her, then came hastily in and shut the door after him, she rose and looked at him with an air of dignified composure. Her face was perfectly colorless.

"Is it true," he began at once, "that you have sympathized with me more than I knew? Tell me! A disappointment now would be too cruel."

Aurelia's full bright eyes opened a little wider, and a faint color warmed her cheeks; but she seemed too much astonished or too indignant to speak. Yet after the first glance, she drooped a little, and leaned on the back of her chair, as if, like that fair Jewish queen, *for delicateness and overmuch tenderness, she were not able to bear up her own body.*

How pure and sweet she was! Silent as dew. How utterly womanly her untainted loveliness!

"Esther!" exclaimed Mr. Southard.

After ten minutes Mr. Lewis put his head out of the carriage door, and made a sign to his wife, who was benevolently contemplating him from the parlor. She raised the window.

"Where is Mr. Southard?" he asked.

"He is saying good-by to Aurelia," was the reply; and the window went down again.

Minutes passed, but no Mr. Southard appeared. It was the day before Christmas, and the air was too sharp to make a long tarrying out doors agreeable.

"I've heard of eternal farewells, but I never before had the honor of assisting at one," muttered Mr. Lewis; and having waited as long as endurance seemed a virtue, he went into the house.

"Where is Mr. Southard?" he asked, looking round the parlor.

"In the library, saying good-by to Aurelia," replied his wife suavely.

Mr. Lewis looked at Margaret.

"Will you tell me what she means? I don't believe her. She always puts on that truthful look when she tells a lie."

Margaret laughed. "I think you may as well dismiss the carriage," she said.

In something less than half an hour Mr. Southard and Aurelia made their appearance. They were received with great cordiality.

"I hope you liked your journey to Europe," said Mr. Lewis with immense politeness. "Is the pope in good health?"

Mr. Southard was beyond the reach of mocking. "I have postponed my journey till this lady can be ready to accompany me," he said. "And I have convinced her that four weeks will be enough for her preparation."

Aurelia went to lean on Margaret's shoulder. She was trembling, but her face showed full contentment. "I would rather be Esther than Vash-ti," she whispered.

"I'm delighted enough to forgive you even a greater impertinence than that, if greater could be," was the whispered answer. "I am not Vash-ti, though you are Esther."

The next day, after coming home from early mass, Margaret sat in her chamber toward the east, with Dora and her two friends, Agnes and Violet, leaning on her lap, and watching her face. She had been telling them the story of that miraculous birth, and, finishing, looked up into the morning sky, and forgot them; forgot the sky, too, presently, with all its vapory golden stretches, and glimpses of far-away blue, and saw instead her life past, present, and to come. Looking calmly, she forgave herself much, for had not God forgiven her? and hoped much, for there was no



room for despair; and grew content, for all that she could desire was within her reach.

Beginning at the lowest, she had an assured home, kind friends, and a dear and sacred duty in the care of this child. So far, all was peace.

One step higher then. Could the friend who still lived on in her heart forget her in that heaven to which her love had led him? And, weak and childish though she was, with her impatience, her scarcely broken pride, her obstinately clinging affection, could she be altogether unlovely to him? Some strong assurance answered no.

Higher yet her thought took its

stand. There was faith, that second sight by which the soul sets her steps aright as she climbs, never missing the way. There was an unfading hope, and a charity that embraced the world. There was God. And all were hers!

As Margaret sat there, the three children leaned motionless, hushing themselves lest they should break that beautiful trance. It was no momentary glow of enthusiasm, no mere uprising of feeling; for mounting slowly, through pain, and doubt, and weakness, she had reached at last the heights of her soul, and saw a wide, bright daybreak over the horizon of a loftier life.









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